TO THE READER

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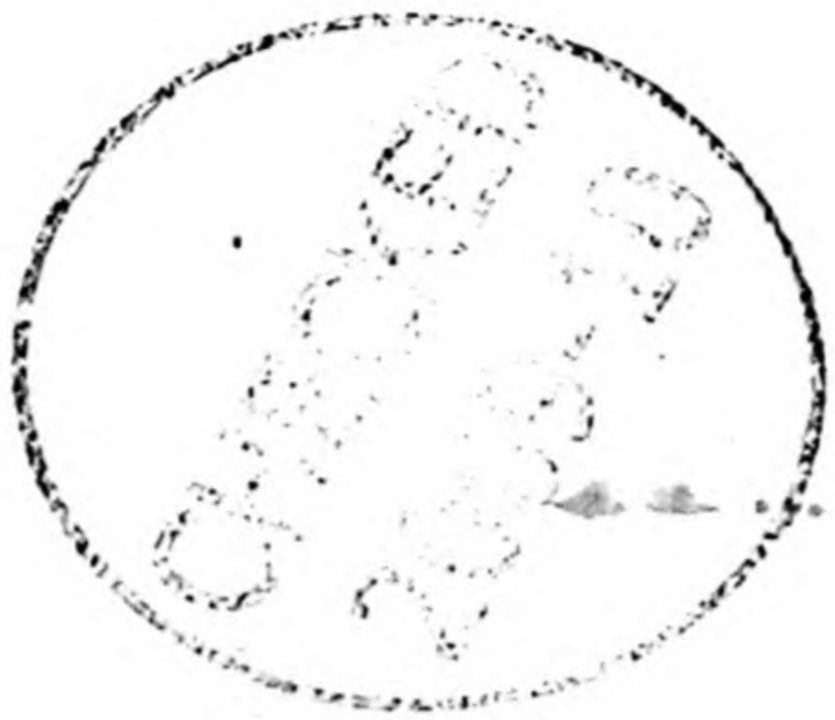

ADEPTS IN SELF-PORTRAITURE

Casanova ★ Stendhal ★ Tolstoy

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

CONFLICTS

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"Adepts in Self-Portraiture" is part of a trilogy entitled "Master Builders, An Attempt at the Typology of the Spirit." The two other volumes, "Three Masters: Balzac—Dickens—Dostoeffsky" and "The Struggle with the Daimon: Hölderlin—Kleist—Nietzsche," are in preparation.

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STEFAN ZWEIG

ADEPTS IN SELF-PORTRAITURE

Casanova ★ Stendhal ★ Tolstoy

TRANSLATED FROM THE GERMAN

BY

EDEN & CEDAR PAUL

LONDON
GEORGE ALLEN & UNWIN LTD
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TO

MAXIM GORKY

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INTRODUCTION

The proper study of mankind is man.

POPE

In the series of volumes whose general title is *Master Builders*, I am trying to analyze the distinctive types of the creative will, and to illustrate these various types by a description of personalities characteristic of each. This third volume of the series* is at once counterpart of the first and second, and their supplement. *The Struggle with the Daimon* showed Hölderlin, Kleist, and Nietzsche as so many variants of the tragic personality driven onward by elemental urges, by daimonic energy—as so many variants of the temperament which, in its movement towards the infinite, strides over itself and over the outer world. *Three Masters* contemplated Balzac, Dickens, and Dostoeffsky as types of epic world-shapers who in the cosmos of their novels create a second reality side by side with the real world known to us all. *Adepts in Self-Portraiture* takes us along a road which leads, not like *The Struggle with the Daimon* towards the infinite, and not like *Three Masters* into the real world, but back into itself. For the adept in self-portraiture, the aim is to disclose the microcosm of his own ego, rather than to depict the macrocosm, the plenitude of existence. Unconscious though it be, this is the purpose of his art; no reality is so important to him as the reality of his own life. Whereas the imaginative writer who creates new worlds beside the real world of objective experience, a writer whose gaze is fixed on the

* The first to be published in English.

outer world, the extravert, merges his ego so thoroughly in the objective that the ego is no longer discernible (Shakespeare is the supreme example)—the writer whose gaze is turned inward, the introvert, makes everything in the real world lead back into his own personality, so that his writings tend before all to be expositions of his own ego. No matter what form he may choose, the drama, the epic poem, lyric verse, or autobiography, he will unawares make his own self the medium and the centre of all his works, so that every one of them will primarily be an example of self-portraiture. The present volume is designed to expound the characteristics of these subjectively minded artists, and of autobiography as their typical method of expression.

I know that my readers will be startled rather than convinced to hear me utter in one breath these three names, Casanova, Stendhal, Tolstoy. What possible standard of values can be applied at one and the same time to an amoral rapscallion such as Casanova (to whom many would even dispute the title of artist), and to a man like Tolstoy, filled with heroic ethical purpose, and in addition a creative artist of the first rank? But when I put these three side by side in one book, I do not imply that they stand side by side on the same spiritual plane. On the contrary their names symbolize three levels which are superposed so as to represent successively higher species of the same genus; they represent ascending gradations of the same creative function, self-portraiture.

Casanova is the lowest, the primitive gradation. In him we have naïve self-portraiture, a simple record of deeds and happenings, without any attempt to appraise them, or to study the deeper working of the self.

In Stendhal, self-portraiture has reached a higher level,

the psychological. Here a simple report, a mere record of the curriculum vitae, is not felt to be adequate. The ego has grown inquisitive as to itself; it watches the mechanism of its own impulses; seeks the motives that actuate it in doing certain things and leaving others undone. A new perspective emerges, arising out of the binocular vision of the ego as subject and object, out of the twofold biography of the internal and the external. The observer observes himself; the one who feels, investigates his own feelings. The subjective, the mental life, has entered the field of vision, which is no longer completely occupied by the things of the outer world.

With Tolstoy, this spiritual self-contemplation attains its highest level, inasmuch as it has now become an ethico-religious self-portraiture. The keen observer describes his own life; the skilled psychologist records the reflex actions that are aroused by his own sensations: besides this, a new factor is at work, the inexorable eye of conscience. Every word is scrutinized as to its truth, every motive as to its purity, every feeling as to its persistent energy. Self-portraiture, transcending the frankly inquisitive phase of self-study, has become a moral self-questioning, a self-assize. When limning himself, the artist is no longer content to depict the kind and the form of his earthly manifestations; he wants also to ascertain their meaning and to appraise their worth.

Such a master in the art of self-portraiture can fill any kind of book with his own ego. But only in one kind can he express himself fully: in autobiography, in the comprehensive epic of the ego. Each strives unwittingly towards this form, and yet few attain it in perfection; of all the varieties of literary art, autobiography, being the most responsible, is the least often successful. It is seldom es-

sayed, so seldom that in the whole world there are scarcely a dozen autobiographies worthy of serious consideration. Rarest of all is the autobiography which takes the form of a profound psychological study; for a man of letters finds it hard to plunge from the familiar levels of straightforward literature into the deepest recesses of the soul.

At the first glance it might seem as if self-portraiture would be an artist's most spontaneous and easiest task. Whom does the imaginative writer know better than himself? Here is a personality whose every experience is familiar, whose secrets have all been revealed, whose most intimate chambers have been unlocked. With no further trouble than a probing of memory and a description of the facts of life, he will reveal "the truth." He will have little more to do than to raise the curtain which hides the stage from the public. Just as no gifts for painting are requisite for photography, the unimaginative and purely mechanical reproduction of a prearranged reality, so, it would seem, the art of self-portraiture does not need an artist at all, but only an accurate registrar. On that theory, anyone you please could be a successful autobiographer.

The history of literature shows, however, that ordinary autobiographers are nothing better than commonplace witnesses testifying to facts which chance has brought to their knowledge. A practised artist, one with eyes to see, is needed to discern the innermost happenings of the soul; few even of the accomplished artists that have attempted autobiography have been successful in the performance of this difficult and responsible task. The path by which a man must descend from the surface into the depths, from the breathing present into the overgrown past, is dimly lit and hard to follow. Bold, indeed, must be he who

would travel that path amid the abysses of his own personality, on the narrow and slippery slope between self-deception and purposive forgetfulness, down into the region where he is alone with himself, where (as when Faust went down to the Mothers) the impressions of his own life exist only as symbols of their former existence in the real world. How much patience and self-confidence he will need before he will be justified in saying the sublime words: "Vidi cor meum!" How arduous is the return from this innermost sanctuary to the conflicting world of literary creation, the return from self-contemplation to self-portraiture! If we want an index to the enormous difficulty of such an enterprise, we can find it in the rarity of success. We can count on our fingers the number of those who have achieved it. Even among autobiographies which draw near to perfection, how many gaps there are, how many hazardous leaps, how much padding and patchwork! Always, in art, that which lies nearest to hand is the most difficult; the undertaking one would have thought the most trivial proves the most formidable. Autobiography is the hardest of all forms of literary art.

Why, then, do new aspirants, generation after generation, try to solve this almost insoluble problem? Here an elemental impulse is at work, powerful as an obsession, the inborn longing for self-immortalization. Placed amid an unceasing flux, overshadowed by the perishable, doomed to perpetual transformation, swept away by the irresistible current of time, one molecule among milliards, we are all of us involuntarily spurred on by the intuition of immortality to seek an anchorage in something, no matter what, which shall outlast our ephemeral existence. Begetting and self-portraiture are, in the last analysis, nothing more than two different ways of expressing

the same primary function, the same endeavour to cut a notch that will endure for a while in the ever-growing tree of humanity. A self-portrait, therefore, is nothing more than the most intensive form of the will to perpetuate oneself; and early attempts in this direction still lacked the developed artistry of the picture, the elaborated aid of writing. Stone blocks set up over tombs; clay tablets on which, in clumsy, wedge-shaped characters, deeds of heroes were recorded; fragments of bark inscribed with runes—such are the forms in which the earliest self-portraits have come down to us across the void spaces of the millenniums. Long since have the deeds become unmeaning, and the language of those mouldering generations has grown incomprehensible. Unmistakably, nevertheless, the records betray the impulse which animated the men and the women who fashioned them, the impulse to portray themselves, to keep themselves in being, by handing down to posterity a trace of the individuality which might thus be preserved when life had fled. The obscure will to self-perpetuation is the elemental urge underlying and initiating every attempt at self-portraiture.

Long, long afterwards, when mankind had become more knowledgeable and more conscious of self, a further conation was superadded to the crude and vague impulse towards attesting that one has existed. Now the individual began to cherish a desire to become aware of himself as an ego, to explain himself to himself for the furtherance of the consciousness of self. When, as Augustine so well phrases it, a man "becomes a problem to himself," and sets out in search of an answer which will concern him alone among mortals, he unrolls the course of his life before himself like a map, that he may see that course more plainly and understand it better. At this stage, he does

not try to explain himself to others, for he wishes, in the first instance, to explain himself to himself. Here he reaches a parting of the ways (we reach it to-day in every autobiography) between the description of life and the description of experience, portrayal for others and portrayal for the writer's own sake, autobiography that is objectively directed and autobiography that is subjectively directed. Writers belonging to the former group have an impulse towards the public avowal. Confession is their characteristic method, confession before the whole world or confession to the pages of a book. Writers of the latter group are prone to soliloquy, and are usually content with writing diaries. Only persons endowed with an extremely complicated temperament such as Goethe, Stendhal, and Tolstoy, have tried to effect the thoroughgoing synthesis in this field, perpetuating themselves in both forms.

Self-contemplation, however, is nothing more than a preparatory step, and not a momentous one. Thus far, sincerity is easy. The artist's real torment does not come until the work of communication begins; not until then is a heroic candour demanded of the autobiographer. For no less elemental than the urge to be communicative, to let all our brethren know about the uniqueness of our personality, is the counter-urge towards secretiveness, manifesting itself in the form of shame. Just as a woman's innermost being tingles with the longing to surrender her body, while in the conscious she is animated with the desire to keep her body for herself, so the will to confession must wrestle with the spiritual modesty which counsels reserve. Even the vainest among us (above all, the vainest among us) feels that he is not perfect, not so perfect as he would like others to think him. For that reason he would fain keep his less amiable characteristics private, would like the

knowledge of his inadequacies and pettinesses to die with him, even while he wishes his likeness to live on among his fellows. Shame, therefore, is the perpetual adversary of sincerity. With flattering tongue she tries to dissuade us from describing ourselves as we really are, and advises us to depict ourselves as we should like people to see us. The artist may honestly resolve to be frank, but with feline artifice shame will lead him astray, will induce him to hide his most intimate self, to gloss over his defects. Under her promptings, all unawares, the draftsman's hand omits or embellishes disfiguring trifles (supremely important, in the psychological sense), or idealizes characteristic traits by an adroit distribution of light and shade. One who is weak enough to follow such promptings will not achieve self-portraiture; he will not get beyond self-apotheosis or self-defence. Honest autobiography, therefore, can never be a care-free narrative. Always the writer must be on his guard against the whisperings of vanity, must strenuously ward off the temptations to touch up the picture he is presenting to the world. For the very reason that nobody else can control the autobiographer's sincerity, that nobody but himself can hold him to account, he must have a combination of qualities which will hardly be found once in a million instances; he must be witness and judge, accuser and defender, rolled into one.

There is no armour of proof against self-trickery. However strong a cuirass we make, we can launch a bullet swift enough to pierce it, and the powers of self-deception can be intensified to cope with the powers of self-knowledge. However resolutely a man may bar the door against falsehood, she will creep in through a chink. If he study the lore of the mind that he may learn how to parry her onslaughts, she will discover a new and cleverer thrust

which will get in beneath his guard. Like a panther, she will crouch in the shadows, to spring upon him when he is most unprepared. The art of self-deception is refined and sublimated by the wider experience, by the growth in psychological knowledge, designed to avert self-deception. One who manipulates truth roughly, prentice fashion, will produce lies which are crude and easily recognizable. Not until a man has a subtle mind are his falsehoods subtilized, refined, so that they can be detected only by one as subtle as himself. When thus subtilized, they assume the most perplexing, the most illusive forms; and their most deceptive mask is invariably the semblance of honesty. Just as snakes prefer to lurk among rocks and boulders, so the most dangerous lies are hidden in the shade of seemingly heroic admissions. When you are reading an autobiography, and come to a passage where the narrator appears amazingly frank, attacking himself ruthlessly, it behoves you to walk warily, for the probability is that these reckless avowals, these beatings of a penitent's breast, are intended to conceal some secret which is even more dreadful. One of the arts of confession is to cover up what we wish to keep to ourselves, by boldly disclosing something far more tremendous. Part of the mystery of the sense of shame is that a man will more readily expose his most hideous and repulsive characteristics than bring to light a trifle that might make him appear ridiculous. In every autobiography, that which is above all likely to lead the writer out of the straight path is the dread of arousing the ironical laughter of his readers.

Jean-Jacques Rousseau, with a passion for self-revelation, trumpets his sexual irregularities. In the contrite vein, he deplores that he, author of *Emile*, the famous treatise on education, should have rid himself of his off-

spring by depositing them in the revolving box at the foundling hospital. Such frankness is suspect. The pseudo-heroic admission was, perhaps, a mask of inhumanity to hide something he found it impossible to acknowledge. The probability is that he never had any children at all, being incompetent to procreate them! Tolstoy, in his *Confession*, shrilly proclaimed himself whoremonger, murderer, thief, and adulterer; but he would not write a line acknowledging the meanness which made him treat his great rival Dostoeffsky so ungenerously. Gottfried Keller, who was familiar with this trick of raising the dust, wrote sarcastically about autobiography in general: "One autobiographer will acknowledge the seven deadly sins, and will conceal the fact that he had only four fingers on his left hand; another will sedulously describe the birth-marks on his back, while he is as silent as the grave concerning his conscience-pricks for having borne false witness. When I compare one with another and study their parade of sincerity, I am led to ask myself whether anyone is sincere, and whether sincerity is possible!"

To expect perfect sincerity in self-portraiture (or elsewhere) would be as absurd as to expect absolute justice, freedom, and perfection here on earth. The most passionate, the most resolute determination to be true to the facts is frustrated at the outset by the undeniable fact that we have no trustworthy organ of truth, that our memory cheats us before we can begin the work of self-portraiture. Memory is not in the least like a register kept in a well-ordered office, a place in which all the documents relating to every detail of our lives are laid away in store. What we vaunt as memory is submerged in the rushing stream of our blood; it is a living organ, subject to the mutations of such organs; it is not a cold-storage chamber, in which

every feeling can retain its natural essence, its original odour, its primary historical form. In this complicated flux to which in our haste we give the specious name of memory, events roll one over the other like pebbles in the bed of a stream, rubbing one another down till they become unrecognizable. They adapt themselves one to another; range themselves this way and that; show a perplexing talent for mimicry thanks to which they adopt shapes and colours conformable to the groundwork of our desires. Everything, almost without exception, undergoes distortion in this transformatory element. Every subsequent impression overshadows the earlier ones; every new memory modifies the old ones, and may sometimes actually reverse their significance.

Stendhal was the first to recognize this untrustworthiness of memory, and to acknowledge his own incapacity for recording his experiences with historical accuracy. A classical instance is his admission that he could no longer be certain whether the impressions persistent in his mind as to "crossing the Great Saint Bernard" were really vestiges of personal experiences on the famous pass, or memories of an engraving of the region seen by him at a later date. Marcel Proust, Stendhal's spiritual heir, gives an even more striking example of memory's capacity for distortion. In boyhood, he tells us, he saw "Berma" in one of her most famous roles. Before seeing her, his fancy had been full of anticipations, which had been merged in the subsequent real impressions of the actress; at the play, his impressions were influenced by the opinion of his companion, and next day they were further transformed by what he read in the newspapers. When, in after years, he saw Berma in the same part, both he and she having become different persons meanwhile, he was no longer

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able to decide what had originally been his "true" impression.

Memory, ostensibly an infallible gauge of truth, is in reality an enemy of truth. Before a man can set himself to the description of his life, there must exist in him an organ competent to produce instead of reproducing; he must have a memory capable of exercising poietic functions, competent to select essentials, to emphasize and to slur, to group things organically. Thanks to this creative power of memory, every autobiographer must involuntarily become a romancer when he undertakes to describe his own life. Goethe, wisest among moderns, knew this. When choosing a name for his autobiography, he renounced the claim to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. "Dichtung und Wahrheit," poesy and truth, might serve as title for every volume of self-portraiture.

Nevertheless, though it be true that no one can tell the absolute truth about himself, and though everyone who writes his own life must perforce deal with the record imaginatively, the very attempt to be truthful demands supreme integrity in all who write confessions. No doubt the pseudo-confession, as Goethe called it, confession under the rose, in the diaphanous veil of novel or poem, is much easier, and is often far more convincing from the artistic point of view, than an account with no assumption of reserve. Autobiography, precisely because it requires, not truth alone, but naked truth, demands from the artist an act of peculiar heroism; for the autobiographer must play the traitor to himself. Only a ripe artist, one thoroughly acquainted with the workings of the mind, can be successful here. That is why psychological self-portraiture has appeared so late among the arts, be-

longing exclusively to our own days and to those yet to come. Man had to discover his continents, to fathom his seas, to learn his language, before he could turn his gaze inward to explore the universe of his soul. Classical antiquity had as yet no inkling of these mysterious paths. Caesar and Plutarch, the ancients who describe themselves, are content to deal with facts, with circumstantial happenings, and never dream of showing more than the surface of their hearts.

Before he can throw light into his own soul, a man must be aware of its existence, and this awareness does not begin until after the rise of Christianity. Augustine's *Confessions* breaks a trail for inward contemplation. Yet the gaze of the famous divine was directed, not so much inward, as towards the congregation he hoped to edify by the example of his own conversion. His treatise was a confession to the community, a model confession; it was purposive, teleological; it was not an end in itself, comprising its own answer and its own meaning. Many centuries were to pass before Rousseau (that remarkable man who was a pioneer in so many fields) was to draw a self-portrait for its own sake, and was to be amazed and startled at the novelty of his enterprise. "I am planning," he writes, "an undertaking which has no precedent. . . . I wish to present my fellows with the portrait of a man sketched with perfect fidelity to nature, and I am myself this man." With the credulousness of every beginner, he still supposes that the ego is "an indivisible unity," and that "truth" is something tangible and palpable. He is still naïve enough to fancy that when the last trump sounds he will appear before the Great Judge and say, pointing to the book in his hand, "This was I." We of a later generation no longer share Rousseau's simple faith. Instead, we have a fuller

and hardier knowledge of the multiplicity and profundity of the psyche. In our craving for self-knowledge, we lay bare the nerves and the blood-vessels of every thought and feeling, following them into their finest ramifications. Stendhal, Hebbel, Kierkegaard, Tolstoy, Amiel, the intrepid Hans Jaeger, have disclosed unsuspected realms of self-knowledge by their self-portraiture. Their successors, provided with more delicate implements of research, will be able to penetrate stratum by stratum, room by room, farther and yet farther into our new universe, into the depths of the human mind.

Let this be a consolation to those who have been led to fear that art will decay in a world rendered unduly conscious by the advance of psychological technique. Art does not cease; it merely takes new turns. A decline in mythopoeic faculty was inevitable. Fantasy is ever most vigorous in childhood, and only in the childhood of a nation is it prone to luxuriate in mythology and symbolism. In compensation for the loss of visionary power, we get a capacity for clear and well-substantiated knowledge. Such a trend is obvious in the contemporary novel, which is becoming the embodiment of an exact science of the mind, whereas of old it was content to draw boldly on imagination. Yet in this union of imagination with science, there is no suppression of art; there is merely a renewal of an ancient family tie. When science began, with Hesiod and Heraclitus, it was still poesy, orphic words and soaring hypotheses. Now, after a divorce which has lasted for thousands of years, the investigatory intelligence and the creative have joined hands once more; and poesy, instead of describing a realm of fable, describes the magic of our human life. The unknown wonders of the physical universe can no longer stimulate imagination, now that

the world has grown familiar from the tropics to the poles, now that its fauna and its flora are everyday objects of contemplation, even the creatures that dwell in the amethystine abysses of the sea. Everything on the terrestrial globe has been weighed and measured, named and docketed, leaving in the physical realm nothing but the stars as objects for flights of fancy. More and more, therefore, must the spirit, impelled by the undying urge for knowledge, look inward, to probe its own enigmas. The internum aeternum, the spiritual universe, still offers art an inexhaustible domain. Man, as his knowledge widens, as he grows more fully conscious, will devote himself ever more boldly to the solution of an insoluble problem, to the discovery of his own soul, to the pursuit of self-knowledge.

Salzburg, Easter, 1928.

CASANOVA
(1725–1798)

Il me dit qu'il est un homme libre, citoyen du monde.

MURALT, WRITING OF CASANOVA IN A LETTER TO ALBRECHT VON HALLER, JUNE 21, 1760

THE MAN AND THE BOOK

He tells himself the story of his life. This is his entire literary output—but what a story!

CASANOVA is an exceptional instance, a chance intruder in world literature, above all because this famous charlatan has as little right in the pantheon of creative geniuses as the name of Pontius Pilate has in the Creed. His rank as imaginative writer is as questionable as his invented title of nobility, Chevalier de Seingalt: the few verses he penned hastily betwixt bed and the gaming table in honour of one lady or another reek of musk and academic paste; one who would read his *Icosameron*, a monstrosity of a utopian romance, needs the patience of a lamb under the hide of a jackass; and when the excellent Giacomo begins to philosophize, it is hard to keep from yawning. In very truth, Casanova has as little claim to enter the company of great writers as he has to a place in the Almanach de Gotha; in both he is a parasite, an unwarrantable intruder. Nevertheless, this son of a shady actor, this unfrocked priest, this ununiformed soldier, this notorious cheat (a superintendent of police in Paris describes him in his dossier as a "fameux filou"), is able to ruffle it for a large part of his life among emperors and kings, and dies at last in the arms of a great nobleman, the Prince de Ligne: and, though he seems a mere pretender in the world of letters, one among many, ashes to be blown about by the winds of time, his roaming shade has

found a place for itself among the immortals. Here, too, is an even more remarkable fact. Whereas nearly all his noble fellow countrymen, the sublime poets of Arcady, the "divine" Metastasio, the distinguished Parini, and the rest of them, are to be found only on the upper shelves of the libraries, have become material for dry-as-dust studies—his name, uttered with an indulgent smile, is still on everyone's lips. According to all earthly probability, his erotic Iliad will still be very much alive, and will still find admiring readers, long after *La Gerusalemme liberata* and *Il pastor fido* have been gathering the dust of ages upon their unread tops. At one stride, the cunning adventurer has outdistanced all the great writers of Italy since Dante and Boccaccio.

Stranger yet, for such immense winnings, Casanova has staked nothing at all; he has overreached fate, and secured immortality by artifice. This gamester knows naught of the overwhelming sense of responsibility which burdens the true artist. Not for him the corvée of unsociability which severs the writer overburdened with work from the warm world of everyday life. Casanova knows naught of the dread pleasure with which the author plans a book, or of the eagerness for perfection which is his tragical associate and torments like an unquenchable thirst. No part of his experience is the mute but masterful and ever unsatisfied demand of fancied shapes to be endowed with earthly circumstantiality, the longing of ideas to be liberated from earth and to soar upwards into the ether. He knows nothing of sleepless nights, followed by days which must be spent in the dull and slavish labour of polishing words and phrases, until at length the meaning shines with all the colours of the rainbow through the lens of speech; nothing of the multifarious but un-

seen toil of the creative writer, unrewarded and often unrecognized for generations; nothing of the man of letters' heroical renunciation of the joys of life. Casanova, as everyone knows, took life easily enough, sacrificing not a morsel of his joys, not an hour of his sleep, not a moment of his pleasures, to the stern goddess of immortality. He never lifted a finger to secure fame; and yet to him, born under a fortunate star, fame has come superabundantly. As long as he had a gold piece or two in his pocket, a drop of oil with which to keep the flame of love alight, as long as he was still able to throw the dice, he had no thought of keeping company with the serious-minded spirit of art, or of soiling his fingers with ink. Only when all doors had been closed upon him, when women began to laugh at his amorous advances, when he was lonely, a beggar, and impotent, when the joys of life had become irrecoverable memories—only then, when he was a shabby and splenetic old man, did he turn to work as a substitute for livelier experiences. Only then, urged on by the lack of pleasure, by boredom, tormented by anger as a neglected cur is tormented by the mange, did he grumblingly set to work to tell the story of the septuagenarian Casaneus-Casanova, the story of his own life.

He tells the story of his own life. This is his entire literary output—but what a story! Five novels, twenty comedies, a sheaf of novelettes and episodes, and a superabundance of fascinating situations and anecdotes, trodden like grapes to form the must of an exuberant narrative: the result is a life history which assumes the aspect of a perfectly rounded work of art though it has not had the ordering touch of the master of literary art. Herein we find the most convincing solution of that which at first seems the inexplicable mystery of his fame. What makes

Casanova a genius is, not the way in which he tells the story of his life, but the way in which he has lived it. That life itself is this great artist's workshop, is at once his matter and his form. To this work of art, really and truly his own, he has given himself up with the creative ardour which imaginative writers in general devote to verse or to prose, glowing with the fiery resolve to stamp every moment, every still undecided possibility, with the highest dramatic expression. What another has to invent, he has actually experienced; what another must form in imagination, he has figured forth in his warm and voluptuous body: that is why, in this case, the pen and the fancy have no need to adorn the truth; enough that they should take a tracing of an existence which has already been effectively staged. No writer of his day, and scarcely a writer since unless it be Balzac, has invented so many variations and situations as Casanova experienced; and throughout a whole century no other man has ever lived a life swinging in such bold curves. Compare, as regards pure wealth of happenings (not as regards spiritual substance or depth of experience) the biographies of Goethe, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, and other contemporaries, with Casanova's own. How much they seem, regarded in the light of that comparison, to run in grooves, how monotonous, how narrow, how provincial appear these lives—purposive though they are, and animated with creative will—beside the elemental career of the adventurer, who changes countries, towns, estates, occupations, worlds, and women, as easily as he changes his shirt; who is everywhere and instantly at home; who is always ready to welcome new surprises. These others are but dilettantes in matters of enjoyment, just as Casanova is a dilettante in the world of letters. That is the eternal tragedy of the man of the spirit, that

he, yearn though he may to fulfil his mission by experiencing all the voluptuousness of life, is nevertheless bound to his task, slave of his workshop, fettered by self-imposed duties, tied to order and to earth. Every true artist lives the larger half of his life alone, engaged in a duel with his creative work. Not in direct experience, but only through the mirror of fancy, may he enjoy the multiplicity of existence. To none but the uncreative, to none but the man of pleasure, to none but him who lives for life's own sake, is it permitted to give himself unreservedly and directly to reality. One who aims at a goal must renounce the delights of hazard. What the artist creates in imagination is, as a rule, what he is debarred from actually living.

On the other hand the counterparts of these artists, easy-going men of pleasure, usually lack the power of describing their manifold experiences. They lose themselves in the passing moment, so that when the moment has passed it is lost for ever, whereas the artist knows how to perpetuate the most trifling experience. Thus do the ends gape, instead of rounding the full circle; one lacks the wine, while the other lacks the goblet. Insoluble paradox: men of action and men of pleasure have more experience to report than any creative artist, but they cannot tell their story; the poietes, on the other hand, must fable, for they have seldom had experiences worth reporting. Imaginative writers rarely have a biography, and men who have biographies are only in exceptional instances able to write them.

Casanova is a splendid, almost unique exception. In him at length we find a man afire with the love of pleasure, a man who plucks at the fleeting hour, grasps at the skirts of happy chance, and is dowered by fate with the most extraordinary adventures; a man with an amazingly

good memory, and one whose character knows nothing of inhibitions. This man tells us the tremendous story of his life, tells it without any moral restraints, without poetical adornments, without philosophic embroidery; he gives us a plain, matter-of-fact account of his life as it actually was, passionate, hazardous, rascally, reckless, amusing, vulgar, unseemly, impudent, lascivious, but always tense and unexpected. He is moved to tell his story; not by literary ambition, not by boastfulness or penitence, or an exhibitionist urge toward confession; but by a straightforward desire to tell it. He tells it, therefore, simply and easily; as a veteran in a tavern, pipe in mouth, talks his best when he relates a few crisp and perhaps rather salacious adventures to unprejudiced auditors. Here the narrator is not a fabulist, an inventor, but the master of poesy, of life itself, life whose world is richer than any world of fancy. All that Casanova need do is satisfy the most modest of the demands made upon the artist; he must render the almost incredible, credible. To this task he is fully equal, despite the language of the memoirs, a somewhat awkward French.* Not even in a dream, however, did this tremu-

*I have no love either for footnotes or for controversy. I am impelled, however, to point out here that we still lack the original text of Casanova's memoirs, in default of which we have no right to pass a final judgment upon his capacity as a prose writer. The text we know is only a Bowdlerized version made by a French teacher of languages a century ago to the order of F. A. Brockhaus, the owner of the original manuscript. It is surely natural to expect that scientific students, at least, would at long last be allowed to see Casanova's actual text; and it need hardly be said that scholars of all lands, members of various academies, have urgently besought this favour. But against the Brockhauses, even the gods fight in vain. The owner of the manuscript, an obdurate autocrat, keeps the precious document locked up in the firm's safe, and, thanks to this arbitrary determination of an individual, one of the most interesting works in the

lous, gouty, and discontented old fellow, who passed the evening of his days in his sinecure occupation of librarian, ever think that in times to come these memoirs of his would be regarded by men of letters and historians as the most valuable record of eighteenth-century life. What would he have thought if Feltkirchner, the steward at Dux, had prophesied that a hundred and twenty years later there would be founded in Paris a Casanova Society, simply in order to scrutinize every fragment of the adventurer's handwriting, to check every date, and to discover if possible the names of the ladies represented in the book by blanks. Paris was forbidden ground; Feltkirchner, his housemate, was his enemy; and the good Giacomo, vain though he was, would have regarded such a prophecy as an ill-natured jest.

In truth we can congratulate ourselves that, despite his vanity, Casanova had no inkling that he was destined to become famous, and therefore was never inclined to pull out the moral, the pathetical, or the psychological stop —for only one who is free from purposes of this order can preserve the heedless and therefore elemental straightforwardness characteristic of the memoirs. The old gamester sits down to his writing table at Dux with his usual composure, and the writing of his book is his last win at the gaming table. But he never learns that he is a winner, for he departs this life before the cards are turned. Yet he has won immortality, nonetheless. Nothing will ever dislodge him from his place among the immortals, this sometime librarian at Dux, from his place beside his adversary Monsieur de Voltaire and other famous authors.

literature of the whole world can only be read and appraised in a grossly distorted form. Hitherto, the firm of Brockhaus has not even vouchsafed any adequate reason for this obstinate refusal.

We have not yet finished writing the story of his life, and its inexhaustible treasures are continually attracting fresh literary craftsmen to pen works of fancy about him. Unquestionably he has been a winner in the game of life, this "commediante in fortuna," this man who was ever ready to try his luck; and no protests of posterity will deprive him of his gains. Some may despise him for his immorality, others may convict him of errors of historical fact, and yet others may disavow him as an artist. But there is one thing that no objector can do—make an end of him! For since he lived his life and wrote his story, no romancer and no thinker has invented a more romantic tale than that of his life, or fabled a stranger personality than Casanova's.

LIKENESS OF CASANOVA IN YOUTH

Do you know that you are an exceedingly handsome man?

SAID BY FREDERICK THE GREAT TO CASANOVA, WALKING IN THE PARK AT SANS-SOUCI (1764)

In the theatre of a petty capital, the singer has just finished her aria with a fine coloratura passage; there has been a thunder of applause; but now, during the recitative, the attention of the audience has wandered. The fops are paying visits to the boxes; the ladies are eyeing people through their lorgnons, and are daintily eating jelly or sipping orange-tinted sherbet, paying scant attention to the antics of Harlequin and Columbine on the stage. Suddenly all eyes are turned inquisitively towards a stranger who, with the easy air of a man of distinction, makes a late entry into the auditorium. Of herculean figure, he is attired as a man of wealth. An upper garment of ash-tinted velvet falls in rich folds over an embroidered brocade waistcoat and costly lace; the darker lines of his vesture are relieved by the gleam of gold lace, which extends from the clasp at his neck on either side of his shirt-frill down to the top of his silk stockings. In his right hand, negligently held, is a white-plumed hat. An aroma of the latest fashionable scent radiates from the unknown, as he leans in an elegant posture against the balustrade, his left hand, gleaming with rings, resting on the jewelled hilt of his sword. As if unaware that he is the cynosure of all eyes,

he lifts his golden lorgnon, and with feigned indifference scans the boxes. There is a rustle of whispered inquiries. Who is it? A prince? A rich foreigner? The whisperers draw one another's attention to the diamond-spangled order which hangs from the scarlet ribbon that crosses his breast, the order he has disguised with so many brilliants that no one recognizes it for one of the papal spurred crosses which are as common as blackberries. The singers on the stage are quick to note the distraction of the audience, and their efforts are relaxed. The ballet dancers, peeping from the wings across the violins and the 'cellos, wonder whether this stranger is a person whose acquaintance is worth making.

Before anyone has been able to solve the riddle of the newcomer's identity, or to learn whence he has come, the ladies in the boxes have been quick to note how handsome he is, how fine a figure of a man. He is tall and broad-shouldered, his hands are strong and sinewy, his frame is tense as steel without a line of softness in it. He stands lightly poised, his head a little lowered, like that of a bull before the charge. Seen in profile, his face recalls those seen on Roman coins, so finely chiselled is it in every line. The forehead is splendidly arched beneath the chestnut hair; the nose is aquiline, the chin powerful, and beneath the chin is a big Adam's apple (which women regard as a sure sign of virility). His features, one and all, give unmistakable proof of dash, resolution, a conqueror's gifts. Only the lips are soft, being red and sensual, gently curved, while peeping from between them, like the flesh of a pomegranate, gleam the white teeth. As the handsome stranger scans the audience, though he does it in leisurely fashion, we note a certain impatience in the eyes that flash from beneath the arched bushy

brows. He has a hunter's glance, the expression of one surveying a quarry, of one who is ready to pounce upon his prey. As yet, however, he is not fully aflame, while his eyes roam along the boxes, and while, paying scant heed to the men, he samples (as a merchant samples wares) the women whose bare necks and shoulders are visible in the shadowy nests. He looks at them one after another, fastidiously, with the eye of a connoisseur, knowing that they are contemplating him in return. As he does so, his sensual lips part a little more widely, and a smile begins to form, a smile that almost reminds us of the snarl of a beast ready to bite. As yet this smile is not directed towards any one woman in particular; it is for them all, for women in general, the essential woman whose warm nudities are hidden under the clothes. Now, in one of the boxes, he recognizes an acquaintance. Instantly his gaze is arrested, his eyes, which a moment before were impudently questioning, show a velvety glitter; he draws his left hand away from his sword hilt, while in his right he grips his heavy plumed hat more firmly; and he moves to greet his lady friend, a word of recognition on his lips. Gracefully he bends to kiss her proffered fingers, and speak to her courteously. For her part, the lady is confused, his caressive tone disturbs her, but she manages to control herself and introduces the stranger to her companions saying: "Le Chevalier de Seingalt."

There are the usual polite amenities. The guest is invited to a place in the box. A conversation ensues. By degrees Casanova raises his voice a little, till it dominates the others. Like a trained actor, he articulates clearly, and tends more and more to speak to a wider audience than that of the box he has entered. He wants all those nearby to hear what excellent French and Italian he speaks,

and how cleverly he can quote Horace. As if by chance, he has let one of his hands fall upon the breastwork of the box in such a way as to display the lace ruffle on his sleeve, and to show the sparkle of the great solitaire on his finger. Then, taking from his pocket a diamond-studded snuffbox, he offers the gentlemen some Mexican snuff, saying: "My friend the Spanish ambassador sent it to me yesterday by special courier." When one of the gentlemen admires the miniature painted on the snuffbox, he says indifferently, but loud enough to be heard through the auditorium: "A present from my friend and gracious lord the Elector of Cologne." Though he seems to say these things quite casually, the braggart is all the while eyeing those to right and left of him with the questing gaze of a bird of prey, that he may judge the effect of his words.

He sees that he is the centre of all eyes; he feels that the women are eager to know more about him; and he grows bolder. With an adroit turn of the conversation, he is able to make it lap over into the adjoining box, where the prince's inamorata is listening well-pleased (he is sure of it) to his admirable Parisian French. Preening himself before this handsome woman, he utters a gallantry, which she smilingly answers. Now his acquaintance has no choice but to introduce the Chevalier to this exalted dame. He has gained his end. Next day at noon he will dine in distinguished company; to-morrow evening, in one of the palaces of the nobility, he will propose a little game of faro, and will plunder his host; to-morrow night he will sleep with one of these pretty women, whose nudity he has already relished in his mind. He will succeed in doing all these things thanks to his bold, self-confident, and energetic entry, his conqueror's will, and the virile beauty of his dark-skinned face. To these he owes every-

thing: the smiles of women, the solitaire on his finger, the diamond watchchain and the gold lace, credit at the bank, the friendship of men of title, and, best of all, freedom to roam at will through an infinitely varied life.

Meanwhile the prima donna has begun a new aria. Bowing profoundly, acknowledging urgent invitations from gentlemen charmed by his conversation, and graciously invited to her levee by the prince's inamorata, Casanova takes his leave and returns to his place. There he sits down, his left hand again poised on the hilt of his sword, while he leans forward to listen to the song. Behind him runs a whisper from box to box, a buzz of questions, which are all answered: "The Chevalier de Seingalt." Nothing more is known of him. No one can say whence he has come, or why, or whither he is going. But the name ripples through the eager hall, and at length makes its way across the footlights to the stage, where the singers have been no less curious as to his identity. On hearing it, a little Venetian dancer laughs contemptuously, and exclaims: "Chevalier de Seingalt? The swindler! He is Casanova, the son of La Buranella; he is the abate who seduced my sister five years ago; old Bragadin's court jester; the braggart, the rascal, the adventurer." Nevertheless, this cheerful young lady does not seem to take his misdeeds altogether unkindly, for she nods to him from the wings, and kisses her hand to him coquettishly. Catching sight of this, he remembers who she is, and is quite unperturbed. He is sure that she will not try to put a spoke in his wheel, will not interfere with his plucking of the distinguished geese. No doubt she will be ready enough to sleep with him to-night!

THE ADVENTURERS

Does she know that your whole fortune is the stupidity of your fellow-men?

CASANOVA TO CROCE, THE CARD-SHARPER

FROM the close of the Seven Years' War down to the outbreak of the French revolution, calm prevailed throughout Europe for a quarter of a century. The great dynasties of Habsburg, Bourbon, and Hohenzollern had fought till they were tired. The burghers sat at home smoking their pipes in comfort; the soldiers powdered their pigtails and polished the muskets for which they no longer had any use; the countries, so long tormented, could at length enjoy a quiet doze. But the rulers found life tedious without any wars. They were bored to death, all the German and Italian and other petty princes, in their diminutive capitals; and they looked round eagerly in search of amusement. Infinitely tedious did they find it, these little grandees, these electors and dukes, in their newly built and damp rococo palaces. It was dull for them there, despite all their pleasure gardens and fountains and orangeries, despite their dungeons and galleries and game-parks and treasure chambers.

With the aid of money extorted from their subjects, and with manners learned from Parisian dancing masters, they ape Trianon and Versailles, each one of them fancying himself cast for the part of le roi soleil. Ennui even

leads them to become patrons of the arts, to affect literary tastes, so that they correspond with Voltaire and Diderot; collect china, coins, old masters; have French comedies and Italian operas staged at their court theatres, showering their favours on foreign artists—for only one of them, the ruler in Weimar, has had the good sense to invite to his court a few Germans, Schiller, Goethe, and Herder by name. Their only other amusements are boar-hunts and water pageants. As always when people of the fashionable world find life tedious, theatricals and dancing assume peculiar importance. That is why these princes outbid one another, that is why they set diplomacy at work, in order to secure the most lively entertainers, the best dancers, instrumentalists, castrati, philosophers, alchemists, and organists. Gluck and Handel, Metastasio and Hasse, are lured from one court to another, turn by turn with cabalists and cocottes, firework artists and huntsmen, illuminators and ballet masters. Each one of these petty princes wants his palace to be distinguished by the presence of the newest, the most splendid, the most fashionable among the famous, being moved rather by the desire to outdo his brother prince at the court twenty miles away than by any reasonable motive. At one court after another they have secured efficient masters of ceremonies, have built fine theatres and opera houses, and have graced these with successful performances; only one thing more is needed to relieve the monotony of life, and to make the eternal round of social intercourse among fifty or sixty titled families assume the aspect of really distinguished society—notable visitors, interesting guests, cosmopolitan strangers, a few raisins for the dough of provincial boredom, a breath from the great world to clear the stuffy atmosphere of a capital containing no more than thirty streets.

They hear of a court, and in a trice they flock thither, the adventurers, in hundreds of masks and disguises. No one can tell you whence they come. They arrive in travelling carriages, or maybe in coaches of the best English pattern, to rent the finest front rooms in the most expensive inns. They wear brilliant uniforms, said to be those of some Indian or Mongolian army; and they bear pompous names, false as the jewels they flaunt on their shoe-buckles. They speak all languages; claim to be the familiar friends of rulers and other people of importance; have served in every army of note; and have studied at all the universities. Their pockets bulge with memoranda of schemes; their mouths are full of promises; they plan lotteries, new taxes, alliances, factories; they offer women and orders and castrati. Although they have not as much as half a dozen gold pieces in their purses, they whisper in every ear that they know the secret of the philosopher's stone. They devise a new trick for each court. In one they let it be given out that they are freemasons and Rosicrucians; in another, where the ruler has a lust for money, they claim to be extraordinarily well versed in the law of transmutation and in the writings of Theophrastus. To a prince whose chief interest is in the fair sex, they offer their services as pimps; to one who has warlike ambitions, they present themselves as spies; to a ruler with a taste for literature and the arts, they introduce themselves as philosophers and poetasters. They snare the superstitious with horoscopes; the credulous with schemes for enrichment; the gamblers with false cards; and the unsuspicious with a veneer of good breeding. But whatever the role they choose, they are careful to invest it with an aroma of mystery which will make it more interesting than ever. Like will o' the wisps, flaring of a sudden and lead-

ing the unwary into danger, they flourish in the stagnant and marshy air of the courts.

They are made welcome at the courts, where people are amused by them without respecting them. No one troubles to inquire the genuineness of their titles of nobility, any more than to ask for the marriage certificates of the ladies who pass as their wives, or for evidence of the virginity of the girls they may bring along. Whoever can give pleasure, and relieve even for an hour that boredom which is the most deadly of all the sicknesses of a court, is sure to be a welcome guest. They are tolerated, as a man tolerates a courtesan who amuses him and does not rob him too impudently. Sometimes an artist or a swindler will have to put up (as had Mozart) with a kick in the behind from a princely boot; sometimes they find their way from the ballroom to the prison, and even, like Afflisio, the manager of the imperial theatre, to the galleys. The cleverest among them feather their nests; become tax-collectors, souteneurs, or even, as complaisant husbands of court whores, genuine noblemen and barons. But for the most part they find it wiser not to wait until the roast burns, for their whole charm lies in their novelty and their incognito. If they turn up the corners of the cards too obviously, if they dip their hands too deep into people's pockets, if they make themselves at home too long in any one court, it may well happen that someone will tear the cloak from their shoulders and disclose the mark of the branding iron or the scar left by the lash. Frequent change of air is necessary to save them from the hangman's noose. That is why they are continually on the move across Europe, commercial travellers of a peculiar kind, gypsies who pitch their moving tents in palace after palace. Thus it is that throughout the eighteenth century a rotation of

the same figures proceeds from Madrid to St. Petersburg, from Amsterdam to Pozsony, from Paris to Naples. At first one is inclined to think it is no more than a lucky chance that, at every gaming table and at all the petty courts one after another, Casanova should encounter the same rogues, Talvis, Afflisio, Schwerin, and Saint-Germain; but the adept knows that such perpetual wanderings denote flight rather than a round of amusements.

There is a genuine freemasonry among these rogues. When they meet as old acquaintances, one of them will hold the ladder for another, and one of them will vouch for another. They exchange wives, coats, names; and there is only one thing which each of them keeps for himself—his own special profession. Parasites of the courts, these actors, dancers, musicians, adventurers, harlots, and alchemists, form, in conjunction with the Jesuits and the Jews, the only International that as yet exists in the world of the eighteenth century; the nobility is sessile, fixed to this court or to that; and the bourgeoisie is dull, immobile, not yet emancipated. But the rabble rout of freebooters, without flag and without fatherland, moves on freely from one country to another and rubs shoulders with all classes. With their appearance, a new age dawns, and a new method of exploitation. They are not like the footpads of old, who plundered the defenceless, not like the highwaymen who, pistol in hand, robbed the travellers in coaches; their art is a subtler one. For them, a ready wit has replaced the cudgel, and a calculated impudence proves more effective than the bravado of the old-style robber. Their success is the outcome of a knowledge of psychology. These new cutpurses have sworn alliance with cosmopolitanism and good manners. They rob their victims with the aid of marked cards and forged bills of exchange.

They are of the same race as the bold fellows who sailed to the Indies in the earlier days, who ruffled it as free companions, who would never be content to earn their livelihood in a humdrum civic fashion, but preferred to take big risks on the chance of filling their pockets at one blow. Now the method has changed, and therewith its physiognomy. The new adventurers have not the rough hands, the sodden faces, the coarse manners of those earlier captains; they have rings on their delicately kept fingers, and their heads are adorned with powdered wigs. They use a modish lorgnon, they walk like dancing masters, articulate like actors, mouth wise sayings like philosophers. With imperturbable visage, they cheat at cards; and with a patter of witty conversation, they persuade women to pay them a long price for love philtres and spurious jewels.

Beyond question, there is something attractive about them one and all; their wit and their psychological insight make them interesting; and some of them deserve to be named geniuses. The second half of the eighteenth century was their heroic period, their golden age. Just as earlier, under Louis XV, the French poets formed a brilliant pleiad, and just as later in Germany a brilliant group of creative writers made the name of Weimar ever memorable, so do the figures of these magnificent swindlers and immortal adventurers brilliantly characterize this particular period of European history. Ere long they are not content with dipping their hands into princely pockets; their ambition is to spin the roulette board of universal history. Instead of serving, they wish to make others serve them, with the result that the activity of adventurers has set its stamp upon the eighteenth century. John Law, an Irish wanderer, convulses the French currency with his

assignats. D'Eon, passing for a man, but one whose sex is as dubious as his reputation, guides international policy. A little round-headed fellow, Baron Neuhof by name, becomes king of Corsica for a time, is later an inmate of debtors' prisons in various capitals, and dies in London as a pensioner in a debtors' prison. Cagliostro, a Sicilian peasant lad, who has never learned to read and write properly, has Paris at his feet, and fashions out of the famous necklace a halter which puts an end to monarchy. Trenck (the most tragical figure of them all, seeing that though an adventurer he was not devoid of true nobility) sports a red cap, plays the hero of freedom—and perishes on the guillotine. Saint-Germain has the king of France at his beck and call, and yet we are still puzzled concerning the mystery of his birth. One and all, these adventurers have more power than men born to power; they stimulate the fancy and arouse the attention of the whole world; they humbug the learned, lead women astray, plunder the rich, pull the strings of the political marionettes. Last and not worst among them comes our Giacomo Casanova, the historiographer of the guild, who describes them all when he describes himself, rounding off the story of these never-to-be-forgotten men with a hundred deeds and adventures of his own. Every one of them is more famous than the authors, more influential than the statesmen of their day; for a brief time they are the masters of a world already doomed to perish.

For the heroic age of the adventurers lasted no more than thirty or forty years! Then the stage on which they played was destroyed by the most finished of their type, by the most brilliant genius of them all, by the arch-adventurer, Napoleon. The characteristic of genius is that it does in real earnest that which talent does only as play-

acting; that it is not content with make-believe, but demands the whole world as a stage for creative activities. When Bonaparte, the impoverished little Corsican, calls himself Napoleon, this is not that he may, like Casanova-Seingalt, or like Balsamo-Cagliostro, hide his bourgeois origin behind a mask of nobility; he is putting forward a masterful claim to superiority, is seizing triumph as his right, instead of endeavouring to snatch it by craft. With Napoleon, adventurer of genius among a crowd of adventurers who had merely talent, the adventurer comes out of the ante-room of princes to seat himself on the imperial throne; and sets for a brief hour the most splendid of all crowns, the crown of Europe, upon his head.

TRAINING AND TALENTS

He is said to be a man of letters, but to have an intelligence rich in cabals; it is reported that he has been in England and in France, has gained inexcusable advantages at the cost of knights and ladies, for it has ever been his way to live at others' expense, and to get the better of the credulous. If we examine the aforesaid Casanova, we see in him unbelief, fraud, unchastity, and voluptuousness, assembled in an alarming way.

SECRET REPORT OF THE VENETIAN INQUISITION, 1775

CASANOVA never denies having been an adventurer. On the contrary, he is proud of having been the flat-catcher rather than the flat, the shearer rather than the shorn, in a world where, as the old adage says, people want to be fooled. One thing, however, he strongly objects to. You must not confound him with commonplace knaves, jail-birds and brethren of the halter, who pick pockets in a rough and commonplace fashion, instead of elegantly charming money out of the hands of the stupid. In the memoirs, he is always careful to shake the dust from his cloak when he has had to acknowledge meeting (and, in truth, making common cause) with the cardsharpers Afflisio or Talvis—for although, as rogues, they have to meet on the same plane, they come from different worlds. He, Casanova, is from an upper world, a cultured

world; they come from below, from nowhere. Casanova thus resembles the sometime student, Schiller's sententious robber-captain, Karl Moor, who despises his confederates Spiegelberg and Schufterle because they have a positive liking for their rough and bloody trade, to which he has taken from a misguided enthusiasm, in order to revenge himself for the baseness of the world. In the same way Casanova always energetically dissociates himself from the mob of common rogues, in whose figures the splendid, the distinguished profession of adventurer forfeits its splendour and its distinction. Nay, verily, our friend Giacomo would have us regard as noble that which the ordinary cit looks on as dishonourable, and the stickler for propriety as revolting. He finds a philosophical justification for the adventurer's career. Far from being an unsavoury business, it is, for him, a fine art. According to him, for the philosopher here below there is no other moral duty than to amuse himself to the top of his bent at the cost of the blockheads, to dupe the vain, cheat the simple, relieve misers of their superfluous wealth, make cuckolds of the husbands—in a word, play the part of envoy of divine justice and punish all the follies of this world. Thus, for him, fraud is not merely a fine art, but a supreme moral duty; and, as a worthy outlaw, he practises it with an excellent conscience and incomparable self-satisfaction.

If we are to believe Casanova, he did not become an adventurer simply because he was short of money and had inherited a slothful disposition, but from temperament, fired by genius. Having had a talent for acting handed down to him by his father and his mother, he made the whole world into his stage, of which Europe was the centre. For him, as for Til Eulenspiegel of old, to hum-

bug his fellows, to make fools of them, came by nature, and he could not live except in a carnival atmosphere of dominoes and jesting. Again and again, a hundred times over, he had a chance of entering some respectable occupation, of settling down in a warm and well lined nest; no temptation of this kind could induce him to make himself at home in a respectable occupation. If you were to offer him millions, high office and a dignified position, he would not accept them; he wished always to remain in his own element. He had good reason, therefore, for the pride with which he distinguishes himself from other adventurers. He is urged on to his madcap exploits, not by desperation, but by sheer delight in what he is doing. Furthermore, it is true enough that he did not originate like Cagliostro from a foul country hovel, or like Count Saint-Germain from utterly unknown beginnings which we may assume to have been equally malodorous. Messer Casanova was certainly born in lawful wedlock, and from a family in tolerably good repute. His mother, nicknamed "La Buranella," was a famous cantatrice, who was acclaimed in all the opera-houses of Europe, and ultimately secured a permanent appointment at the court theatre in Dresden. His brother Giambattista's name is mentioned in every history of art as a noted pupil of Raphael Mengs, who was still regarded as a great artist at the close of the eighteenth century. This youngest Casanova's battle canvases can be seen in the leading galleries. The second son, Francisco, was likewise a painter of considerable renown. Giacomo's other relatives pursued dignified avocations, that of lawyer, priest, and the like.

We see, then, that our Casanova did not come from the gutter, but sprang from the same artistic and variegated stratum of the burgher class as Mozart and Beethoven.

Like them, he had had the advantage of an excellent general education. Having the gift of tongues he was able, amid all the scrapes of his youth and despite his premature amorous escapades, to learn Latin, Greek, French, and Hebrew, with a little Spanish and English thrown in —although for thirty years the German language remained outside his ken. He excelled in mathematics no less than in philosophy. He was a competent theologian, preaching his first sermon in a Venetian church when he was not yet sixteen years old. As a violinist, he earned his daily bread for a whole year in the San Samuele theatre. When he was eighteen, so runs the tale, he became doctor of laws in the University of Padua—though down to the present day the Casanovists are still disputing whether the degree was genuine or spurious. This much is certain, that he must have had many advantages of a university education, for he was well informed in chemistry, medicine, history, philosophy, literature, and, above all, in the more lucrative (because more perplexing) sciences of astrology and alchemy. In addition, the handsome, nimble young fellow early became skilled in all the less intellectual arts that were then proper to a gentleman, such as dancing, fencing, riding, and card playing. If we add to these acquirements that he had an amazingly good memory, so that in all his life he never forgot a face, and never failed in the ability to recall anything he had heard, read, uttered, or seen, we have the picture of a man with quite exceptional endowments: almost a savant, almost a poet, almost a philosopher, almost a gentleman.

But this "almost" was for Casanova the heel of Achilles. He was almost everything: a poet and yet not wholly one, a thief and yet not a professional one. He strove hard to qualify for the highest intellectual rank,

and strove hard to qualify for the galleys; yet he never succeeded in attaining perfection. As universal dilettante, indeed, he was perfect, knowing an incredible amount of all the arts and all the sciences; but he lacked one thing, and this lack made it impossible for him to become truly productive. He lacked will, resolution, patience. Let him study the books of some specialty for a year, and you will find no better jurist, no more brilliant historian. He might become a professor of any science, so quickly and accurately does his brain work. But he has no taste for thoroughness. A confirmed gamester, he finds serious application impossible; intoxicated with the wine of life, he revolts against commonplace perseverance. He never wants to be anything, for he is content to seem to be everything. The semblance suffices him, since it deceives his fellows, to cheat whom is an inexhaustible delight. Experience has taught him that a little learning is enough. In any domain, no matter what, where he has the first elements of knowledge, a splendid assistant springs to his aid—his stupendous impudence, his unchallengeable self-confidence, his swell mobsman's courage. Whatever Casanova undertakes, he never admits that he is a novice in the enterprise. He promptly assumes the manners of an expert, plays the swindler or cardsharper to perfection, and can almost always extract himself from a tangle. In Paris, Cardinal de Bernis asks him whether he knows anything about lotteries. He is as ignorant of them as a babe unborn, but it need hardly be said that he answers glibly in the affirmative, appears before a committee, and, with his unrivalled gift of the gab, unrolls financial schemes as if he had been a bank manager for the last twenty years. He is in Valencia when the text of an Italian opera is missing. Casanova sits down and writes one offhand. Beyond a doubt if he had

been asked to write the music as well as the libretto, he would have sharked up something out of the old operas. In Russia, he presents himself to Catherine the Great as a reformer of the calendar and a learned astronomer. In Courland, a no less ready-made expert, he inspects the mines. Playing the chemist, he recommends to the republic of Venice a new method of dyeing silk. In Spain, he poses as a land reformer and a colonizer. He drafts for Emperor Joseph II an elaborate scheme to prevent usury. He writes comedies for the duke of Waldstein; constructs the tree of Diana and similar specimens of alchemist hocus-pocus for the Marchioness of Urfé; and he opens Madame de Rumain's treasure chest with the key of Solomon. He buys shares for the French government. In Augsburg, he presents himself as Portuguese ambassador; in France, he is by turns a manufacturer and the pimp who keeps the royal "deer park" supplied; in Bologna, he writes a pamphlet on medicine; in Trieste, he pens a history of Poland and translates the *Iliad* into ottava rima. He has the talent for doing anything in the world without making himself look ridiculous. If we glance through the list of his posthumous writings, we fancy that they must be those of a universal philosopher, of an encyclopædist, of a new Leibnitz. Here is a long novel, side by side with the opera *Odysseus and Circe*, an attempt at doubling the cube, a political dialogue with Robespierre. If you had asked him to give a proof of the existence of God or to write a hymn in praise of chastity, he would not have hesitated for a moment.

Beyond question he was a man of splendid and most varied gifts! Conscientiously applied in any direction, whether to science, art, diplomacy, or business, they would have sufficed to achieve wonders. Casanova delib-

erately frittered away his talents upon the purposes of the fleeting moment; and he, who might have been anything, preferred to be nothing—but free. "The idea of settling down was always repulsive to me, and a reasonable course of life never came natural to me." He cannot endure the prospect of a fixed occupation, whether it be that of well-paid manager of lotteries to His Most Christian Majesty, or that of a manufacturer, or that of a fiddler, or that of author. Hardly has he seated himself anywhere, when he gets bored by the daily routine, trips forth from his cosy nook into the street, and hastens to stake his all upon some new hazard. His true profession, he is convinced, is to have no profession; to give all the arts and sciences a trial by turns, and to change roles night after night like an actor in a repertory theatre. Besides, why should he moor himself anywhere? He does not want to have and to hold. A man of impetuous passions, he wants, not one life but a hundred. Since he is a devotee of freedom, since he only wishes to be assured of income and amusement and the joys of love for the hour that has just begun, since he never demands permanent security, he can laughingly dispense with home and possessions, which are nothing more than ties. Had they been written then, he would have approvingly quoted the lines of Grillparzer:

> The thing thou holdest, has thee in its grip;
> And where thou rulest, art in truth a slave.

Casanova would never be the slave of anything or anyone except chance, which does indeed handle him rudely at times, but is surprisingly good to him as a rule. True to this mistress, he contemptuously rejects anything that could chain him fast, and is a free thinker in the most lit-

eral sense of the term. "My greatest treasure," he says proudly, "is that I am my own master, and have no dread of misfortune." A manly device, which ennobles him more than does his borrowed title of "Chevalier de Seingalt." He pays no heed to what others may think of him, but leaps with charming recklessness over the moral hurdles with which they would fence him in, indifferent to the anger of those whom he leaves behind and to the wrath of those whose hedges he breaks down. As he speeds onward, he gets flying views of those who are engaged in fixed occupations; they seem to him ridiculous and contemptible. Nor is he impressed by the warlords, rattling their sabres, and yet yielding to the clamour of their generals. The learned are bookworms. The financiers sit anxiously watching their money-bags, and cannot sleep o' nights for fear lest their strongboxes should be rifled. No woman can hold him long in her arms; no ruler can persuade him to stay within the boundaries of any one country; no occupation can bind him for more than a brief space. In these matters, too, he breaks boldly out of the Leads, for he will rather risk his life than let it turn sour. All his talents, all his abilities, all his powers, all his courage, and all his genius, he will stake day after day on the table of fortune, his goddess. That is why his existence remains as mutable as running water, now appearing as a fountain sparkling in the sunshine, now as a cascade thundering down into a dark abyss. From a prince's table into prison, from the easy life of a spendthrift with money in his purse to that of a man who can only get food by pawning his coat, from seducer to souteneur, he moves with lightning speed; and through it all his spirits are mercurial, he is wanton in days of good fortune and equable in days of evil, always full of courage and confidence.

Courage, that is the keynote of Casanova's art of life; that is his gift of gifts. He does not try to ensure against disaster, but fearlessly risks his life. Among the thousands whose motto is "safety first," here is one who hazards all, and takes every chance. Well, we know that Dame Fortune smiles on the bold. She gives freehandedly to the idle and to the impudent where she is a niggard to the diligent; she prefers the impatient to the patient; and thus, upon this one man who is so immoderate in his demands, she showers more gifts than upon a whole generation of his contemporaries. She lifts him up and casts him down again, hurries him from land to land, gives him plenty of exercise. She sates him with women and fools him at the gaming table; she titillates him with passions, and cheats him with fulfilments. But she never forgets him, and never allows him to suffer from tedium. Herself indefatigable, she is a fit partner for this indefatigable man, perpetually finding him new opportunities and new ventures. Thus does his life become diversified, fantastical, kaleidoscopic, as hardly another in many centuries. Thus it is that he, who tells the story of his own life, he who never either was or wanted to be anything real, became an incomparable fabulist of existence—not, indeed, by his own will, but by that of life itself.

PHILOSOPHY OF SUPERFICIALITY

I have lived as a philosopher.

CASANOVA'S LAST WORDS

When life flows in so broad a stream, this always implies a certain lack of spiritual depth. One who can dance on all waters with as much agility as Casanova, must needs be as light as a cork. Thus the essential characteristic of his greatly admired art of life is seen, when we look at it closely, to consist, not so much in a positive virtue or power, as in a negative—in his complete freedom from any kind of moral inhibition. If we take this morsel of humankind, through whom the warm blood of passion streams so ardently, and examine his psychological make-up, the first thing that strikes us is the utter lack of ethical organs. His heart, his lungs, his liver, his brain, his muscles, and especially his seminal vesicles—these, one and all, are vigorous and healthy. But when we turn to study the spiritual sphere, where moral peculiarities and convictions are aggregated to form the mysterious tissue of character, we encounter absolute vacancy. There is nothing of this sort to be seen. With our acids and other solvents, with our scalpels and our microscopes, we shall still fail to detect in this otherwise sound organism even a trace of what is called conscience, of that spiritual super-ego which controls the impulses and senses. In so much firm, pleasure-loving flesh, we cannot find the merest trace of a moral nervous system. That explains the whole enigma of Casanova's subtle genius. Lucky man that he is,

he has only sensuality, and lacks the first beginnings of a soul. Bound by no ties, having no fixed aim, restrained by no prudential considerations, he can move at a different tempo from his fellow mortals, who are burdened with moral scruples, who aim at an ethical goal, who are tied by notions of social responsibility. That is the secret of his unique impetus, of his incomparable energy.

He voyages round the world, and never wishes to set his foot on firm ground. He is independent of laws, a free-booter, a filibuster, urged onward by his uncontrolled passions. Like other outlaws, he ignores the conventions of society, disregards social regulations, has no respect for the unwritten laws of European morality. What other men regard as sacred or important, is to him not worth a doit. If you try to explain to him the nature of a moral or conventional obligation, he will understand you just as little as a quashee nigger can understand metaphysics. Do you talk to him about love of country? He is a cosmopolitan who, during the seventy-three years of his life, has never had a sleeping-place of his own, and has lived at the sport of chance; he laughs at patriotism. Ubi bene, ibi patria; where he can best fill his pockets, and can most easily make his way into the bed of any woman for whom he takes a fancy; where he can most easily lead fools by the nose and enjoy all the comforts of life—there he stretches his legs out underneath the table and feels himself at home. Do you ask him to respect religion? He will profess any religion you like to name, will have himself circumcised or wear a Chinese pigtail, if the one or the other brings him the most trifling advantage; and all the time he will scoff at the new creed as heartily as he scoffs at the Roman Catholicism in which he was brought up. What does he need with a religion, he who believes only in the

warm joys of this world? "Probably there is no life after death; but if there be, we shall find out in due course." Thus does he argue, nonchalantly, uninterestedly, disregarding subtleties. Carpe diem, make the most of the fleeting hour, suck it dry like a grape and fling away the skin; that is his maxim. Cling to the world of senses, to the visible, the tangible, pressing all the juice of pleasure you can out of each instant as it passes. There you have the whole of his philosophy, and it is one which enables him to throw aside with a contemptuous laugh all the bourgeois moral precepts based upon honour, respectability, duty, shame, and loyalty, which would hinder a man from giving free rein to his impulses.

Honour? What can honour mean to Casanova? He esteems it no more than did fat Falstaff, who said, truly enough, that honour cannot set an arm or a leg, or take away the grief of a wound. Casanova is like the worthy English member of parliament, who once remarked in the House that he was continually hearing of our obligations to posterity, but would very much like to know what posterity has done for us. Honour cannot be enjoyed, cannot be grasped; it serves only to interfere with the enjoyment by interposing duties and obligations. That is enough to show that regard for honour is superfluous, seeing that duty and obligation are to Casanova the most detestable things in the world. The only duty he knows is the duty of feeding his high-strung body full of pleasure, and of sharing that elixir of pleasure with the greatest possible number of women. He never troubles to ask, therefore, whether his own warm fragrant existence has for others a good or a bad, a sweet or a sour taste; whether they regard his conduct as honourable or dishonourable, as worthy or shameful.

Shame? What an extraordinary word, what an incomprehensible idea! There is no such word in his dictionary. With the frank indifference of a lazzarone, in the full gaze of the public, he cheerfully takes down his breeches, and, with a broad grin, displays his genital organs, cheerfully discloses what another would keep to himself even on the rack, boasts of his rogueries, makes a parade of his very failures, his blunders, his attacks of venereal disorder; and he does all this, not with the mien of one who feels impelled to trumpet the crude truth, as does Jean-Jacques Rousseau, fully aware that his hearers will be amazed and horrified. Casanova is frank and unconcerned because he is not equipped with the nerves that would have enabled him to recognize moral distinctions, because he has no sense-organ adapted to make him aware of moral considerations. If you were to reproach him for having cheated at cards, he would merely answer, astonished at your chiding: "Oh, yes, I did cheat; I was in want of money!" Should you berate him for seducing a woman, he would answer with a laugh: "I gave her a jolly good time!" He would never dream of offering any excuse for having charmed money out of the pockets of the credulous. On the contrary, in his memoirs he approves these misdeeds of his by cynically remarking: "Reason takes its revenge when one cheats a blockhead." He does not defend himself. He never repents. Instead of wearing sackcloth and ashes, instead of lamenting over a misspent life which is ending in abject poverty and dependence, the toothless old rogue writes with delicious impudence: "I should regard myself blameworthy if I were rich to-day. But I have nothing left, I have squandered all my possessions, and that is a great consolation to me."

He has laid up no treasure in heaven, has not refrained

from indulging any of his passions out of regard for the dictates of morality or the welfare of his fellows; he has hoarded nothing, either for his own sake or for others'; and from his seventy years nothing is left to him save memories. Even these memories he would not hoard, but, to our good fortune, has squandered them on us. Surely, therefore, we should be the last to complain of his spendthrift ways!

To put Casanova's philosophy in a nutshell, it begins and ends with the admonition: "Live for this world, unconcernedly and spontaneously; do not allow yourself to be cheated by regard for another world (which may indeed exist, but whose existence is extremely doubtful), or by regard for posterity. Do not let finespun theories divert your attention from things close at hand; do not direct your endeavours towards a distant goal; follow the promptings of the moment. Foresight will cripple your activities here and now. Do not trouble your head with prudential considerations. Some strange deity has set us down in our seat at this gaming table of a world. If we wish to amuse ourselves there, we must accept the rules of the game, taking them as they are, without troubling to inquire whether they are good rules or bad."

In actual fact, never for a moment did Casanova waste his time in pondering the problem whether this world could have been or ought to have been different. "Love mankind, but love it as it is," he says in conversation with Voltaire. Do not try to play providence; leave that sort of thing to the creator of the world, who is responsible for it. Do not try to knead the old dough, for you will only soil your hands; it is much simpler, and far more agreeable, to pick out the raisins, daintily. One who thinks too much about others, forgets himself; one who devotes too much

attention to watching the course of the world, paralyses his own limbs. It seems to Casanova quite in order that stupid folk should have a bad time. As for the clever ones, God does not help them, and it is their own business to help themselves. Since we have to live in a crossgrained world, where some wear silk stockings and drive in carriages, while others, with empty bellies, must go afoot and in rags, then, for a reasonably clever fellow, the obvious thing is to make sure that he will be one of the carriage-folk—seeing that a man lives for himself, and not for others. No doubt that sounds extremely selfish; and yet, how can a philosophy of enjoyment be anything but selfish, how can one be an epicurean unless one is indifferent to the welfare of society? He who has a passionate desire to live for his own sake is perfectly logical when he callously disregards the fate of others.

Indifferent to others, indifferent to the great problems which each new day brings to mankind, Casanova lives his three and seventy years in impudent self-satisfaction. If, with his keen eyes, he looks eagerly to right and to left, this is only because he is in search of amusement, and does not want to miss any chances. But he will never wax indignant, will never follow Job's example of propounding unseemly questions to God Almighty. With an amazing economy of feeling, he takes everything as it comes, without troubling to label it as good or evil. When O'Morphi, a little Flemish drab of Irish extraction, fifteen years old, a girl who sleeps on straw and is ready to sell her virginity for a ducat, becomes a fortnight later one of the mistresses of His Most Christian Majesty, has a palace in the Parc aux Cerfs, is loaded with jewels, and in due course marries a complaisant nobleman; or when he himself, who was yesterday a poor fiddler in a Venetian

suburb, suddenly finds himself adopted son of a patrician, has money in his pocket and diamonds on his fingers —these things seem to him curious incidents, worth recording, but nothing to make a fuss about. That is the way of the world, unjust and incalculable. Since it will always be like this, always unjust, always incalculable, why rack your brains trying to discover a law of gravitation? Life is a switchback, and such fantastic ups and downs are its commonplaces. Only fools and the avaricious try to play roulette on a system, thus depriving themselves of the true enjoyment of the game. The real gambler, in life as well as at the gaming table, finds the greatest of all charms in the incalculability of events. Use tooth and claw to secure the best for yourself, "voilà toute la sagesse." Be a philosopher for your own good, not for the good of humanity. As interpreted by Casanova, this means that you are to be strong, covetous, ruthless, as you clutch the flying moments and make the most of them. For this convinced pagan, nothing but the actual moment counts. The next moment is uncertain. Never does he allow his pleasures to be interfered with by thinking of next time, for this present time makes up his whole world, the here and now which he can grasp with all his organs. "Life, be it happy or unhappy, fortunate or unfortunate, is the only good man possesses, and he who does not love life is unworthy of life." Only that which breathes, only that which meets pleasure with pleasure, only that which (skin to skin) caressively responds to his hot caresses—this and only this seems, to our confirmed anti-metaphysician, truly real and interesting.

Thus Casanova's interest in the world is confined to the organic, to the human. Never in his life, as far as we can judge, did he contemplate the starry heavens. The beauties

of nature left him cold. Flutter the pages of the sixteen volumes of his memoirs. You see a man with keen senses travelling through the most beautiful landscapes of Europe, from Posilipo to Toledo, from the Lake of Geneva to the Russian steppes; but you will never find any reference to the beauties of natural scenery. A dirty little wench in a soldiers' drinking booth seems to him more important than all the works of Michelangelo; and he finds a game of cards in a stuffy tavern more beautiful than a sunset at Sorrento. Scenery and architecture are sealed books to Casanova, since he lacks the organ which brings us into touch with the cosmos, since he has no soul. Fields and meadows glowing red at sunrise, dew-sprinkled, with the long shadows of the trees lying athwart them; for him they are but green surfaces, on which the peasants, stupid as their own cattle, toil and sweat that their lords may have gold in pouch. Bosquets and dark alleys, they are some use certainly, for there a man can get out of sight with a woman when he wishes to enjoy himself. As for flowers, they are useful presents when you want to catch a woman's fancy. But, having eyes only for human beings, he is colour-blind to the aimless, the purposeless beauties of nature. For him, the world consists exclusively of towns with their galleries and their promenades, where the carriages drive up and down in the evening; the haunts of lovely women, places beset with coffee-houses in which one can play faro and win money from the other guests; places where there are opera-houses and brothels, and where it is easy to find a bedfellow for the night; places where there are good inns in which the cooks poetize with sauces and ragouts, and make music with white wine and red. Only the towns are the world for this man of pleasure, since in them alone can chance provide its mani-

fold surprises, since there alone has the incalculable room to work out its infinitely numerous and entrancing variations.

Casanova loves towns for the sake of their thronging population. In the towns are women as he enjoys them, in the plurality which saves him from the risk of monotony. Among towns, he likes best of all court towns, towns where luxury is rife, for there the voluptuous is sublimated into the artistic. Casanova, sensual though he be, is not a crude sensualist. An aria, beautifully sung, can charm him; a poem can captivate him; agreeable conversation warms his wine for him. To converse with clever men about books, or to listen to music while, in a box at the opera, he sits closely pressed against a fascinating woman; these intensify his joy in life. But we must not make any mistake here. Casanova's love for art is merely sportive, and never gets beyond the pleasure of a dilettante. For him, the spirit must serve life, since he will never live in order to serve the spirit. For him, therefore, art is nothing more than the finest and most subtle of aphrodisiacs; a means for stimulating the senses, for heightening enjoyment. It is a prelude to passion, a prelude that will enhance the subsequent joys of the flesh.

He will write a little poem, and will hand it, with a garter, to a lady whom he covets; he will recite some verses of Ariosto, to inflame her passion; with gentlemen, he will converse wittily about Voltaire and Montesquieu, that he may put himself on a good footing with them intellectually, and mask his designs on their purses. But this sensualist, a lazy southerner, never troubles himself about art or science when these demand pains and thoroughness, when they have to be pursued as ends in themselves and as disciplines having a worldwide signifi-

cance. One who has no thought beyond amusement, he shuns depths because he is content with the surface of things, with the frothy and perfumed upper levels of existence, with chance flirtations. He is always enjoying himself as a dilettante, and that is why he is so light on the wing, can flit so easily from blossom to blossom. Just as Dürer's Fortuna speeds barefoot over the spinning earth, borne up by her pinions, wafted onward by any wind that blows, settling nowhere, faithful to none, so does Casanova skim over the surface of life, forming no ties, but changing ever. Change is for him "the salt of pleasure," and pleasure is the only meaning of the world.

Buoyant on the wing as a mayfly, empty as a soap-bubble, sparkling in the light of passing events, he flutters on his way. Can we say that he has a character at all, seeing that it varies from hour to hour, and has no substance we can grasp? What is Casanova at bottom? Is he good or evil? Is he an honest man or a knave, a hero or a scamp? He is one or the other as the hour may dictate. Chameleon-like he takes his colour from circumstances, changing as the background varies. When he is in funds, you will not find anywhere a more distinguished gentleman. With charming profusion, with a radiant grandeur, amiable as some great prelate and merry as a page, he scatters his money with both hands. "I was never one to trouble about thrift." Like a high-born patron, he invites casual strangers to dinner, presents them with jewelled snuffboxes and rouleaux of ducats, does everything he can to delight them. But if you meet Casanova when his pockets are empty, and when unpaid bills are accumulating, I would advise you to avoid playing cards with this galantuomo. He will be in the mood to cheat you at every turn, will get you to change forged notes for him, will trade off his

mistress, will play you the most scurvy tricks. As undependable as a throw of the dice, he will to-day be the best and most entertaining companion in the world, and to-morrow a villainous footpad; on Monday he will pay court to a woman with all the delicacy of an Abelard, and on Tuesday he will play the pimp and sell her favours to anyone willing to give him a ten-pound note.

You cannot say that Casanova has either a good character or a bad one; he has no character at all. Character and spiritual substance are not among his attributes, any more than fins are proper to a mammal. His actions are neither moral or immoral; they are simply amoral. Whatever he does is the reflex outcome of his physical make-up, and is quite uninfluenced by reason, logic, or ethical considerations. Let him catch sight of a woman, and all his pulses are beating; blindly he moves towards her under the urge of his temperament. When he comes across a gaming table, his hand is instantly in his pocket, and before he knows it he has staked his money. Do something that annoys him, and his fury has no bounds, his eyes flash, his cheeks flame, he clenches his fist and strikes out madly, charges "come un bue," as his fellow countryman and brother adventurer Benvenuto Cellini says. It is absurd, therefore, to hold Casanova accountable for what he does. It is not he who acts, but the hot blood within him, and there is no "he" to cope with its elemental impulses. "I never have been and never shall be able to master myself." He does not reflect and he never looks forward. When he is in a tight place, some brilliant flash of insight will often get him out of the difficulty, but he never calculates, never tries to plan before difficulties come. He is too impatient for that. Read the memoirs, and you will see that all his decisive actions, ranging from absurd prac-

tical jokes to the most outrageous rascalities, were the outcome of explosions of caprice, and were never dictated by intelligent calculation. Impulsively, one day, he casts aside the abate's frock; on another occasion, when he is a soldier at the front, he sets spurs to his horse and canters over the lines in order to surrender to the enemy; he sets off for Russia or for Spain, following his nose, carrying no letters of recommendation, and without having troubled to ask himself why he is going or whither. All his decisions are like unexpected pistol shots, the fruit of a sudden whim, of a determination to escape from boredom. So unexpectedly do these impulses hurl him out of one situation into another, that he is often startled, and rubs his eyes in his surprise. Indeed, he has to thank his bold reliance upon casual promptings for the richness of his experience. One who acts logically, one who calculates every step, does not become an adventurer; and a careful strategist will never enjoy such wonderful chances.

Nothing, therefore, could be more fallacious than the way in which many of our imaginative writers who choose Casanova as a hero of a play or a novel depict him as endowed with a thoroughly alert intelligence, as being of a reflective type, as Faust and Mephistopheles rolled into one. All his impetus is the outcome of his failure to reflect, of his amoral heedlessness. Instil no more than a drop or two of sentimentality into his blood, burden him with self-knowledge and a sense of responsibility, and he will no longer be Casanova; drape him Byronically, add a conscience to the ingredients of which he is composed, and you will have an alien being. His essence is unreflection. Unreflectingly, he grasps at every toy that comes within his reach; at women, at pleasures, at other people's purses. In this, he is not driven by daimonic, by elemental

forces; the only elemental force that drives Casanova has a commonplace name and a familiar, stupid countenance —is nothing other than boredom. Since he has an absolutely vacant mind, has no inner resources, he can only escape infinite boredom by an incessant recurrence of objective experiences; without the oxygen of adventure, he is suffocated. Hence his insatiable greed for whatever he has not yet had, for anything different from what he has known; hence his unappeasable hunger for new experiences. Having no inner source of productivity, he must unceasingly assimilate vital substance from without; but this voracious appetite is utterly different from the daimonic urge of the essentially masterful and acquisitive temperament—that of a Napoleon, who must add land to land and kingdom to kingdom, impelled by a thirst for infinity; or that of a Don Juan, who must seduce one woman after another, that he may know himself to be autocrat of another infinity, the world of woman. Casanova, who is nothing more than a pleasure seeker, does not traffic in such superlatives; he is merely on the lookout for a continuity of pleasure. He is not like the man of action, not like the man of the spirit, whom a fanatical illusion drives on towards a dangerous tension of feeling; he wants nothing more than the genial warmth of enjoyment, the sparkling delight of the game; adventures, adventures, adventures, ever varying; occupation for the ego, reinforcement of life. Above all, not to be alone; not to shiver in a frosty vacancy of solitude!

Look at Casanova when entertainment is lacking. Then, every sort of rest becomes to him a terrible unrest. He arrives at eventide in a strange town. Nothing will induce him to spend the last hours of the day in his room, communing with his thoughts, or reading a book. He

snuffs the wind eagerly, to see if it brings with it any scent of amusement. In default of better, the chambermaid at the inn can help to keep him warm as he lies abed that night. Lounging at the bar, he will hold converse with chance comers; he will play faro with cardsharpers in any low gaming house; will spend the night with the most pitiful harlot rather than sleep alone: always the sense of inner vacancy drives him into converse with his fellows, for only through friction with other living creatures can his own vitality be kept up. Directly he is alone, he becomes one of the gloomiest, one of the most bored of men. We see this in his writings, the memoirs alone excepted. It is plain during the lonely years at Dux, where he speaks of boredom as "hell," as "the inferno which Dante forgot to describe." Just as a whipping-top must be incessantly lashed if it is to be kept spinning, so Casanova needs an incessant spurring from without. Like so many other adventurers, he is an adventurer because of his lack of spiritual energy.

That is why, as soon as the natural tension of life begins to flag, he has recourse to the artificial tension of gaming. At the gaming table he can find an abbreviated recapitulation of the tension of life, artificial dangers and artificial rescues. The gaming table is the asylum of all men of the fleeting hour, the perpetual solace of the idle. At the gaming table, he can enjoy a stormy ebb and flow of the feelings; the empty seconds, the weary hours, are filled with the titillation of anxiety, with shuddering expectation. Gambling, therefore, like nothing else in the world with the doubtful exception of women, solaces with spurious adventures the man who is weary of himself, and serves better than anything else to occupy one who has no inner resources and occupations. Never was any one more

hopelessly subject to the lure of the gaming table than Casanova. Just as he cannot look on a woman without longing to possess her, so he cannot see money on a gaming table without putting fingers into his pockets to take out his own stake. Even when he recognizes in the man keeping the bank a notorious plunderer, a colleague in cardsharping, he will still hazard his last ducat, knowing perfectly well that he will lose it. Casanova himself, beyond question—although the memoirs are chary of acknowledging that which police records place beyond dispute—was one of the cleverest cardsharpers of his day; and for all his skill in other forms of roguery, and his incidental earnings as a souteneur, cardsharping was his chief means of subsistence. Nothing, then, can show his obsession with the passion for gambling, nothing can manifest his craze for games of chance, more plainly than this, that, although he was himself a plunderer, he would continually allow himself to be plundered because he could not resist the gambler's lure. Just as a prostitute, whose money is earned laboriously enough, will hand over these hard-earned gains to her bully simply in order to experience in actuality the pleasures she stimulates in intercourse with her ordinary clients, so does Casanova disburse to past masters at the game the funds he has impudently filched from novices. Not once, but twenty times, a hundred times, does he lose on the turn of a card all that he has gained by arduous cheating. This is what stamps him as gambler in blood and bone, that he does not play in order to win (how tedious that would be!) but in order to play; just as he does not live in order to be rich, happy, and comfortable, but simply in order to live, being here likewise the born gambler. He never looks for a final relief of tension. What he wants is perpetual tension, the

unceasing alternation of red and black, of spades and diamonds. Only in these perpetual ups and downs does he find contentment for his nerves.

In ordinary life, as at the gaming table, he needs these gains and losses, the conquest and discarding of women, the contrast between poverty and riches, unending adventure. Inasmuch as even such a life as his, ceaselessly varying though it be like a moving picture on the screen, nevertheless has intervals, sudden breaks, sudden surprises, and sudden storms, he fills in these empty pauses with the artificial tension of the gaming table. Thanks to his mad ventures here, he is able to achieve the amazing oscillations of fortune, his swift ascents to the zenith, and his no less swift plunges to the nadir. To-day his pockets are stuffed with gold, he is a grand seigneur, with two servants standing at the back of his coach; to-morrow he has had to sell his diamonds to a Jew, and even to pawn his breeches (this is not written in jest, but is literally true, for the pawn-ticket was found at Zurich). That is how our arch-adventurer likes to live, moving on from explosion to explosion of fortune and misfortune. Enjoying hazard for its own sake, again and again he stakes his life upon a cast. Ten times, in duels, he stood in the very jaws of death. A score of times he was in imminent danger of the pentitentiary or the galleys. Millions passed into his hands and out again, and he never troubled to save. For the very reason that he gave himself thus unreservedly to the game of life, enjoying to the full every woman, every moment, every adventure; for that very reason, though he was to drag out his declining years as a poor pensioner in a strange land, he attained his highest aim—an infinite abundance of life.

HOMO EROTICUS

Seducer, say you? Nay, I was but there
When Nature, with her splendid witchery,
Began her work. Nor must you dub me false,
For I am ever thankful in my heart.

ARTHUR SCHNITZLER: CASANOVA IN SPA

He is a dilettante, and generally a second-rate one at that, in all the arts God has created: he writes lame verses and dull philosophical disquisitions; he can play the fiddle passably; and the best one can say of his conversation is that it shows an encyclopædic smattering. He may count as an expert in all the games of the devil's making, such as faro, biribi, dicing, dominoes, the confidence trick, alchemy, and diplomacy. But in the art of love, Casanova excels all his rivals. Here his manifold talents, which are fragmentary and botched for the most part, combine with a subtle chemistry to make of him the perfect erotist; in this matter, he is indisputably a genius of first rank. His physique is enough to show that he was designed for the service of Cytherea. Nature, parsimonious as a rule, has been free-handed here, equipping him liberally with sap, sensuality, vigour, and beauty; a man apt to delight women's hearts, a thoroughly masculine creature, strong and supple as steel, a well-tempered example of his sex, massive in mould, and yet admirable in form. You would make a big mistake were you

to imagine Casanova, the conqueror of women, to have been of the delicate type of male beauty which is nowadays in vogue. This bel uomo is no ephebe; nothing of the sort! He is a stallion of a man, with the shoulders of the Farnese Hercules, the muscles of a Roman wrestler, the bronzed beauty of a gypsy lad, the impudence and audacity of a condottiere, and the sexual ardour of a satyr. His powers of resistance are stupendous. Four attacks of venereal disease, two doses of poison, a dozen sword thrusts, the terrible years passed in the Leads at Venice and in pestilential Spanish jails, hurried journeys from Sicilian heats to the frosts of Muscovy—none of these things abate his phallic energy by a jot. No matter when or where, the merest spark from a woman's eyes, the first intimation of a woman's nearness, suffices to set his invincible sexuality aflame. For a busy quarter of a century he is invariably the Messer Sempre Pronto, the Mr. Ever Ready, of the Italian farces, indefatigably teaches women the higher mathematics as the most efficient of their lovers, and up till the age of forty knows only by hearsay of that distressing fiasco which Stendhal, in his treatise *De l'amour*, thinks important enough to discuss in a supplementary section. A body that is never weary when appetite calls, an appetite which never fails, a passion which no extravagance can impoverish, a gambler's impulse that shrinks from no hazard—rarely indeed has nature bestowed upon any master so perfectly stringed and sensitive a bodily instrument, so splendid a viola d'amore for playing all the tunes of love. In any and every profession, for perfect mastery there is requisite, not only inborn talent, but also incessant concentration upon the pursuit. There must be a monogamic devotion to the chosen occupation, com-

plete absorption in some particular direction; through that alone can absolute proficiency be secured. As the musician cultivates music, as the poet gives himself up to writing of verses or the miser to the hoarding of money, as the fanatic for sport throws everything else aside in his passion to break the record, an amorist who is to outdo all others must regard the wooing, the coveting, and the possession of woman as the most important, nay as the only, good in the world. The passions are jealous one of another, and for this reason he must have nothing to do with any other passion than that of love, must find therein the whole meaning of the world. Casanova, fickle though he be, remains constant in his passion for woman. Offer him the doge's ring of Venice, all the wealth of the Fuggers, a patent of nobility, a house and a comfortable appointment, fame as a general or an author; he will contemptuously throw aside these worthless trifles to hurl himself into the chase of some woman he has not yet possessed, to enjoy her feminine aroma, the delicious thrill of certain-uncertainty that she will yield to him in the end. Everything else the world can promise—honour, office and dignity, wealth, any pleasure you like to name—he will disregard for the sake of a love adventure, and even for the barest possibility of such. He does not need to be positively in love; the mere inkling that a love adventure is at hand is enough to arouse anticipatory delight.

Let me give one example out of a hundred, that of the episode which you will find at the beginning of the second volume, when Casanova is posting to Naples on important business. At the inn where he has halted for a brief space, he catches sight of a pretty woman in a neighbouring room, in a stranger's bed (that of a Hungarian

captain). Nay, what makes the matter more absurd is that he does not yet know whether she is pretty or not, for she is hidden under the bedclothes. He has merely heard laughter, a young woman's laughter, and thereupon his nostrils quiver. He knows nothing about her, whether she is attractive or the reverse, likely to be compliant or not, whether she is a possible conquest at all. Nevertheless he casts aside all his other plans, sends his horses back to the stable, and remains in Parma, merely because this off-chance of a love adventure has turned his head.

Thus does Casanova act after his kind anywhere and everywhere. By day or by night, in the morning or in the evening, he will commit any folly in the hope of spending an hour with an unknown woman. Where he covets, he grudges no price; where he wishes to conquer, he recks of no resistance. Wishing to see a woman once more, a German burgomaster's lady of whom he does not even know whether she can make him happy, he forces his way, in Cologne, into a company where he has not been invited, where he knows himself to be unwelcome, and has to accept a rating from the host and to endure the derision of the other guests. But what does the rutting stallion care for the blows of the whip that are rained on him? Casanova will cheerfully spend the whole night in a damp cellar, will endure cold and hunger and the company of rats uncomplainingly, for the chance that when dawn comes he will be rewarded by an hour of not overcomfortable amorous dalliance. He will, ever and again, risk sword thrusts, pistol shots, invectives, extortions, disease, humiliations—and for what? Not, as would be comprehensible enough, for an Anadyomene, for the pearl of womanhood, infinitely worthy of a man's love. He will

risk all these things for Mistress Everywoman, for Mistress Anybody, simply because she is a woman, because she is a member of the opposite, the coveted, sex. Every pimp, every souteneur, can plunder this famous seducer; every complaisant husband or easygoing brother can involve him in the most discreditable affairs—provided his senses are stimulated. And when are they not stimulated? When is Casanova's erotic thirst fully quenched? Semper novarum rerum cupidus, always eager for some new thing, always questing after new prey, his lusts are incessantly aquiver for the unknown. A town without a love adventure is no town for him; the world without women is not a world. Just as his lungs need air, and his muscles need alternation of movement and repose, so does this virile body of his need the recurrent tensions and discharges of amorous embraces. Not for a month, not for a week, scarcely even for a day, can he feel at ease without women. In Casanova's vernacular, abstinence means, very simply, dullness and boredom.

Since he has so gargantuan an appetite, and since he satisfies it so persistently, we can hardly be surprised to find that the quality of his feminine provision is not always of the best. So champion a sensualist cannot afford to be fastidious; he cannot be an epicure, and must be content with the role of glutton. Consequently, it is no particular recommendation to a woman that she has been one of Casanova's innumerable mistresses. She need not have been a Helen of Troy, nor yet a chaste virgin, nor yet remarkably witty or wellbred or attractive, in order to enjoy the privilege of this gentleman's embraces. Enough for him, generally speaking, that she should be woman, vagina, his polar opposite in matters of sex, formed by nature to enable him to discharge his libido. Beauty, shrewdness,

tenderness—no doubt these are agreeable accessories, but altogether subsidiary to the main point, sheer femininity; femininity, incorporated in a perpetually new shape, is all that Casanova desires.

You must rid yourself of any romanticist or æsthetic notions concerning this extensive Parc aux Cerfs. Casanova's collection, like that of any professional amorist (perforce undiscriminating), is of unequal quality, and is anything but a gallery of beauty. You will certainly find there some sweet and tender girls, such as might have been painted by Casanova's fellow-countrymen Guido Reni and Raphael; others might have been limned by Rubens, or sketched by Boucher upon silk fans: but side by side with these you will find English street-walkers, whose hard and impudent faces only the pencil of a Hogarth could have drawn; hideous old witches who might have graced the canvases of Goya; poxy drabs in the style of Toulouse-Lautrec; rough peasant-women and servant-girls such as Breughel might have painted—a medley of beauty and foulness, wit and vulgarity, a chance assembly at a fair, thrown together haphazard without assortment or choice.

For when his passions run away with him, this pan-erotist has coarse nerves, and his fancy wanders into strange and devious paths. One who is ever at the mercy of his amorous impulses knows no preferences. He pounces on the first comer; fishes in all waters, be they clean or dirty, be they fenced or unfenced. This boundless and reckless eroticism knows nothing of the restrictions imposed by morality or good taste, by station or by age; it knows nothing of above or below, of too early or too late. Many of the objects of Casanova's passion are so young that in our stricter times his indulgence

would certainly have brought down on him the heavy hand of the law; and others are women well advanced in years, including that septuagenarian ruin, the Marchioness of Urfé—assuredly the most preposterous love-affair which ever a man has shamelessly recorded for the information of posterity. This most unclassical Walpurgisnacht ranges through all countries and all classes. Delicate girls, in the shuddering thrill of their first shame; distinguished ladies wearing priceless lace and resplendent with jewels; the scum of brothels; randy old women —all join hands in this witches' dance. The niece replaces the aunt, the daughter the mother, in the still-warm bed; procuresses give Casanova their own daughters, and husbands make it easy for him to possess their wives; soldiers' wenches and ladies of rank and station enjoy the pleasure of his embraces on the same night. You must not think it possible to depict the love adventures of Casanova after the graceful manner of eighteenth century pastoral etchings. You must, for once, have the courage to contemplate undiscriminating eroticism in all its crude contradictions, in its unmistakable realism, as the pandemonium of masculine sensuality.

Such a lust as Casanova's has no exceptions. It is lured equally by the abstruse and by the everyday; there is no anomaly which does not inflame it, nor any absurdity which can chill it. Lousy beds, dirty linen, offensive odours, comradeship with pimps, the presence of spectators, extortion, the diseases that attend indiscriminate venery, are inconsiderable trifles for this divine bull who, like the second Jupiter, wishes to embrace Europa, to clasp the whole world of woman in his arms, to sate his almost maniacal lust. But in one respect, his passions are scrupulously masculine. Stormy as is the raging torrent

of his blood, it never flows outside the natural channel. Casanova's impulses are exclusively directed towards members of the other sex. He loaths contact with a castrato, and angrily whips a Ganymede out of his path. Despite all his vagaries, he remains constant to the world of women. But within this world his ardour knows no limits.

That is what gives Casanova his unprecedented power over women, that is what makes him irresistible —the Pan-like power of his rushing impetus, the elemental force of his sexual appetite. The hidden passion in women's own blood responds to this fierce passion of the male animal, to the tremendous ardour of the opposite sex. They let him take possession of them because he is fully possessed by them; they fall to him because he has fallen to them—and not so much to the one woman in the case, as to the plurality of women, to the universal femininity in the particular woman of the moment, to the opposite pole of his own sex. Intuitively they feel that here at length they have encountered one to whom nothing is more important than woman. He is not like nearly all other men, wearied by affairs and duties; now listless and husbandly, now eager and ardent; his wooing no more than a secondary and occasional matter. He assails them with the torrential might of his nature; he does not spare, he spends; he does not hesitate, does not pick and choose. In very truth, he gives himself to the uttermost, to the last drop of lust in his body, to the last ducat in his purse; always and unhesitatingly he is ready to sacrifice everything else to a woman because she is a woman, and at the moment can quench his thirst for woman.

To Casanova, the first and last word of enjoyment, and all enjoyment that lies between, is to see women happy, amazed with delight, rapturous, laughing, carried out of

themselves. As long as he has money left, he lavishes presents on the woman of his momentary choice, flatters her vanity with luxurious trifles, loves to deck her out splendidly, loves to wrap her in costly laces before he unclothes her that he may enjoy her nakedness, loves to surprise her with gifts more expensive than she has ever dreamed of, loves to overwhelm her with the tokens of his extravagant passion. He is like one of the gods of Hellas, a bounteous Zeus, showering on his beloved the golden rain of his ardent passion. In this, too, he resembles Zeus, that thereafter he speedily vanishes into the clouds. "I have loved women madly, but I have always preferred freedom even to them." This increases his attraction, for the stormy phenomena of his appearance and disappearance enshrine him in their memory as something unwonted, which has brought them rapturous delight, so that association with him is never staled by habit.

Every one of these women feels that Casanova would be impossible as a husband, as a faithful Céladon; but as a lover, as a god of a passing night, they will never forget him. Though he forsakes them one and all, none of them would have had him different from what he was. Casanova, therefore, need only be himself, faithful to the unfaithfulness of his passion, and he will win every woman. A man such as this has no need to wear false colours, to pretend to be other than he is; he need not devise lyrical arts of seduction. Casanova need merely let his frank passion run its course, and this does the wooing for him. It is vain, therefore, for timid youths to devour the sixteen volumes of his Ars Amandi, in the hope of learning the master's secret. The craft of seduction can be no more learned from books than the writing

of poetry. There is nothing to be learned from Casanova; there is no peculiar Casanova-trick, no Casanova-technique of conquest and taming. His only secret is the straightforwardness of his desire, the elemental onslaught of his passionate nature.

I said just now "straightforward," but I might just as well have said "upright" or "honest"—astonishing words to apply to Casanova. No matter; though at the gaming table he has no scruple about using marked cards, and though in any other field than love he is the most accomplished of cheats, where love is concerned we must admit that he shows a straightforward honesty of his own kind. Casanova's relationship to women is truly honourable, because purely passionate, purely sensual. It may seem deplorable, but it is true that insincerity in love makes its first appearance with the intermingling of higher feelings. The body, stupid worthy fellow that he is, does not lie; he never intensifies his appetites beyond the naturally attainable. Not until intellect and sentiment come to play their part in the game, not until their soaring pinions are at work, does passion become exaggerated, and therefore false, introducing fancied eternities into our earthly relations. It is easy, therefore, for Casanova, who never prates of transcending the realm of the bodily, to keep his promises; for, supplied from the well-stored magazine of his sensuality, he exchanges pleasure for pleasure, the bodily for the bodily, and never runs into debt in the spiritual sphere.

That is why the women who have passed the night with Casanova do not feel that they have been cheated of platonic expectations. For the very reason that he has never demanded from them any other raptures than the orgasms of the flesh, for the very reason that he has never

made any pretence of an eternity of sentiment, there will be no subsequent phase of disillusionment. You have every right, if you wish, to describe such eroticism as love of the baser sort, as purely sexual, unspiritual, and animal; but you must not dispute its straightforwardness, its honesty. Surely this braggart, with his frank desire for possession, deals more honestly, deals better, with women than do the romanticist enthusiasts, the "great lovers," like (to give one example) the sensual-supersensual wooer Faust, who, in his extravagance, swears by sun and moon and stars, calls God and the universe to witness the nobility of his feelings for Gretchen, in order (as Mephistopheles has long foreseen) to end these high flights in a thoroughly Casanovese fashion, and, in the most earthly manner possible, to rob the poor fourteen-year-old girl of the treasure of her virginity. The path of a Goethe or a Byron is strewn with feminine wreckage. Men of a higher, a more cosmic nature, lift their companions to such sublime levels that the poor women, while unable to adapt themselves permanently to this stellar atmosphere, are unable, thereafter, to readapt themselves satisfactorily to their earthly habitat. Casanova's flash of earthly passion, on the other hand, does very little harm to their souls. He is not responsible for any shipwrecks, for any outbreaks of despair. He has made a great many women happy, but has made no women hysterical. From the episode of sensual adventure, they return undamaged to everyday life, to their husbands, or to other lovers, as the case may be. Not one of them commits suicide, or falls into a decline. Their internal equilibrium has never been disturbed, for Casanova's unambiguous and radically healthy passion has never touched the mainspring of their destiny. He has blown athwart them like a tropical hurricane, and after

he has passed they will bloom in a more ardent sensuality. He has made them glow without singeing them; has conquered them without destroying them; has seduced them without corrupting them. Precisely because his erotic assault has been confined to the resistant tissues of the epidermis, and has never reached the vulnerable depths of the soul, his conquests never lead to catastrophes. Consequently, there is nothing daimonic about Casanova as a lover; he never brings tragedy into a woman's life. In the drama of love, the world's stage knows no more brilliant an episodist than he, but he is nothing more than an episodist.

Recognizing the utter lack of spirituality in Casanova's love adventures, we cannot fail to ask ourselves whether this libido which is purely physical, which is inflamed by the mere rustling of a woman's petticoat, is entitled to the name of love. Certainly not in a sense which would put Casanova, homo eroticus vel eroticissimus, in the same category with Werther or Saint-Preux, the immortal lovers. The sense of spiritual exuberance aroused by the sight of the beloved, a feeling akin to piety, which makes the lover regard his beloved as of one nature with the universe and with God, this ecstatic expansion of the soul under the influence of Eros, remains unknown to Casanova from the first day to the last. Nothing that he has ever written, no letter, no verses, betrays the existence in him of any amatory sentiments beyond those directly related to physical possession; and it is doubtful whether we can ascribe to him the faculty of true passion. For this "amour passion," as Stendhal terms it, is, by its invariable uniqueness, incompatible with any such diurnal ordinariness; it is necessarily of rare occurrence, the outcome of a prolonged storing of the sensibilities, which are at

length, like a lightning flash, discharged on the beloved object. There is no such thrift about Casanova. He squanders his ardours too often, relieves his tensions too frequently, to be capable of such high intensities of discharge. His passion, flowing away at the purely erotic level, knows nothing of the ecstasy of uniqueness. We need have no anxiety, therefore, when he seems reduced to despair because Henriette or the beautiful Portuguese lady has left him. We know that he will not blow out his brains; nor are we surprised to find him, a day or two later, amusing himself in the first convenient brothel. If the nun C. C. is unable to come over from Murano, and the lay-sister M. M. arrives in her place, Casanova is speedily consoled. After all, one woman is as good as another! It soon becomes plain to us that, as an arch-erotist, Casanova was never really in love with any one of the innumerable women he possessed. He was in love with the plurality, with the incessant variations, with the multiplicity of love adventures.

He himself made a dangerous admission when he said: "Already I realized obscurely that love is nothing beyond a more or less lively curiosity." That is all. He is curious. He wants to repeat his experiences again and again, and always with a different woman. It is not the individual that stimulates him, but the variation, the new and ever new combination upon Eros' inexhaustible chessboard. His taking and leaving is as simple and natural a function as inspiration and expiration. That is why Casanova, as an artist, was never able to make any one of his thousand women a really lifelike figure to us. His descriptions of them arouse a suspicion that he never troubled to look his mistress lovingly in the face, but was content to regard her in "certo punto." What rouses

him, what "inflames" him, is always the same. A true southerner, he is interested in the grossly sensual, in "country matters," in a woman's most obviously sexual characteristics. Again and again, till we grow weary of the iteration, he describes "alabaster breasts," "divine hemispheres," "the figure of a Juno"; and again and again he refers to the chance disclosure of "more intimate charms"; all the things that a lad in his salad days gets excited about in a servant wench. Thus, of the countless Henriettes, Irenes, Babettes, Mariuccias, Ermelines, Marcolinas, Ignazias, Lucies, Esthers, Saras, and Claras (one might almost write every name that has been given to a woman), little remains beyond a flesh-coloured jelly of voluptuous feminine bodies, a bacchantic medley of figures, functions, and enthusiasms—reminding us of the musings of a man who wakes in the morning with a sore head, and finds it difficult to recall where and with what boon companions he got drunk overnight. Of all the women he describes, not a single one moves before us vividly in the body, to say nothing of the soul. He has enjoyed them only skin-deep, has known them exclusively in the flesh.

Thus the accurate yard-stick of art discloses to us even more surely than life itself how immense a difference there is between mere eroticism and love in the true sense of the term; between that which wins all and retains nothing, and that which achieves little but by spiritual power makes the transient perdurable. One single experience of Stendhal's (in truth, no hero in the field of love) contains, through sublimation, more spiritual substance than three thousand nights of Casanova's. As for the possibilities of love's most blissful spiritual ecstasies, Casanova's sixteen volumes give us less of an inkling of them than the brief-

est of Goethe's lyrics. Casanova's memoirs, therefore, regarded from the upland, are seen to be a statistical work of reference rather than a romance, the history of a campaign rather than a work of creative authorship; they are a codex eroticus, an occidental Kama-sutra, an Odyssey of the wanderings of the flesh, an Iliad of the eternal masculine rut for the eternal Helen. Their value depends upon quantity, not quality; upon multiformity, and not upon spiritual significance.

For the very reason that his sexual experiences were so multifarious, for the very reason that his physical potency was so unexampled, to our world, which is for the most part only interested in "records" and rarely measures spiritual capacity, Giacomo Casanova has become symbolical as phallic conqueror, has become proverbial, thus receiving the crown of popular acclamation. When we speak of a Casanova, we mean an irresistible champion, a devourer of women, a master seducer. In masculine mythology, the name is the counterpart of Helen, or Phryne, or Ninon de Lenclos, in feminine. The son of a Venetian strolling player has received the unexpected honour of being incarnated as an amatory hero for all time. No doubt he has to share his pedestal with a companion, in this case a legendary figure. Beside him stands a man of bluer blood, obscurer nature, and more daimonic type—his Spanish rival, Don Juan. The latent contrast between these two masters in the art of seduction has often been pointed out (most happily, as far as I know, by Oscar A. H. Schmitz); but the comparison, or rather the antithesis, has no more been exhausted than has the antithesis between Leonardo and Michelangelo, Tolstoy and Dostoeffsky, Plato and Aristotle.

The comparison between Casanova and Don Juan is

reiterated generation after generation, each generation in turn being fascinated by the diversity-in-likeness of these two primal forms of eroticism. Although Casanova and Don Juan resemble one another in this respect, that they are both birds of prey, so far as women are concerned, continually pouncing on victims whose alarm is tinctured with delight, there is an essential distinction between the two types. As contrasted with Casanova, easygoing, unprincipled, free from inhibitions, Don Juan is cribbed by the regulations of a caste; Don Juan is a hidalgo, a Spanish nobleman, and even in revolt he remains a Catholic by sentiment. As a Spaniard pur sangre, in the depths of his heart, he is profoundly influenced by the concept of honour; and as a mediæval Catholic he unwittingly accepts the ecclesiastical valuation of all carnality as "sin." From this transcendental perspective of Christianity, extra-conjugal love is satanic, is forbidden by God's ordinances, is a heresy of the flesh—and is all the more alluring in consequence! Casanova, the free-thinker, a child of the Renaissance, laughs heartily at such antiquated ideas. For Don Juan, woman is the instrument of sin, and exists only to subserve the purposes of "evil." Her very being is a seduction and a danger, so that what seems to be the most perfect virtue in a woman is but a semblance, and the trail of the serpent is over it all. Don Juan does not believe in the purity, the chastity, of any of this devil's brood; he knows that under their clothes they are all equally naked, all equally accessible to seduction. He is urged on by an inner impulse to prove woman's fatal weakness by a thousand and one instances; to convince himself, the world, and God that all these unapproachable doñas, these professedly faithful wives, these ingenuous girls, these brides of Christ, are without exception willing to admit the right

sort of wooer to their beds; he wants to prove that they are only "anges à l'église et singes au lit." Such a conviction, such a determination, is what drives him onward incessantly to renewed and reiterated acts of seduction.

Nothing, therefore, could be more misguided than to represent Don Juan, the arch-enemy of the female sex, as amoroso, as the universal lover of women, seeing that he is never moved by true love towards any of them. The elemental force that impels him against women is the primal hate that inspires the male. When he takes possession of a woman, he is not seizing that which he wishes to have for himself, but is taking away from her something he wishes to deprive her of, is despoiling her of her most precious treasure, her honour. His lust is not, like Casanova's, an affair of the seminal vesicles, but an affair of the brain. Spiritually, though not corporeally, he is a sadist, eager to degrade, to shame, to humiliate femininity at large. His enjoyment is reached by devious paths; it depends upon an imaginative anticipation of the despair the woman will feel when she has been possessed, dishonoured, disclosed in all her fleshliness. For Don Juan, therefore, the pleasures of the chase are intensified by its difficulties, in contrast with Casanova, who enjoys most the quarry which he finds easiest to run down. For the Spaniard, the more unapproachable a woman, and the more unlikely it seems that he will be able to win her, the greater and more convincing (as proof of his thesis) the ultimate triumph. Where there is no resistance, Don Juan finds no attraction. We cannot fancy him spending the night, like Casanova, with a harlot in a common stew. His senses are only stimulated when he is engaged in the devilish work of debasing what he enjoys, of pushing his partner into sin, of leading her to commit a unique offence, one that

can never be repeated, that of the first act of adultery, that of surrendering her virginity, or that of violating her sacred vow of chastity. As soon as he has had his will of such a woman, the experiment is finished, and the object of seduction has become a mere number in a register. He never wants to look caressingly again on the companion of last night, the one and only night. As little as the sportsman cares for the bird he has brought down, just so little does this professional seducer care about his victim once the experiment is over. He must go on with the hunt, must sacrifice the greatest possible number to his primal impulse, must continue for ever and a day to prove that all women are frail. Don Juan knows no rest, and in truth finds no enjoyment. He is the sworn enemy of woman, and the devil has equipped him with everything he needs for the campaign: wealth, youth, birth, bodily charm, and, most important of all, absolute callousness.

In actual fact a woman, as soon as she has been defeated by his coldly calculating technique, regards Don Juan as the devil incarnate. All his victims hate to-day as ardently as they loved yesterday their arch-enemy, who on the morning after possession wounds them to the heart with his cold and scornful laughter. (Mozart has immortalized it!) They are ashamed of their weakness; they rail at the villain who has deceived them; and in his person they loathe the whole male sex. Doña Anna, Doña Elvira, and all the rest, having once yielded to his calculated impetuosity, remain thenceforward embittered, poisoned in spirit. The women, on the other hand, who have given themselves to Casanova, thank him as if he were a god, glad to remember his ardent embraces, for he has done nothing to wound their feelings, nothing to mortify them in their womanhood; he has bestowed upon

them a new confidence in their own personality. The very thing which the Spanish satanist, Don Juan, forces them to despise as the depth of debasement, as bestial rut, as the most devilish of woman's weaknesses—the glowing ardours of the moment of surrender—Casanova, delicate master of the erotic art, persuades them to recognize as the true meaning, the holiest duty, of their feminine nature. Refusal, unwillingness to surrender, says this gentle priest and vigorous epicurean, is the sin against the holy ghost of the flesh, against the god-given significance of nature. Thanks to his thankfulness, rapt by his raptures, they feel themselves freed from all blame and unloosed from every inhibition. With a caressive hand, when he strips them of their clothing he strips them of all shyness and all anxiety—these half-women, who do not become wholly women until they have given themselves. He fills them with delight because he is himself delighted; he exculpates them for their enjoyment by his own grateful ecstasies. Casanova does not fully enjoy himself with a woman unless she share his delight. "Four-fifths of my pleasure has always consisted in making women happy." For him, pleasure must be set off with pleasure, just as the lover demands love in return. His Herculean labours are undertaken to exhaust and delight not so much his own body as that of the woman he clasps in his arms.

Since he is thus an altruist in love, it would obviously be absurd for him to use force or artifice in order to secure the physical enjoyment he covets. Never, like Don Juan, does he desire crude possession; he must have a willing surrender. We have no right, therefore, to style him a seducer. He invites a woman to join him in a new and fascinating game, in which he would like the

weary old world (burdened by inhibitions and scruples) to participate, finding a fresh impetus in Eros. Freedom from scruples, this and nothing else releases us from the chains which bind us to earth. Every woman who gives herself to him becomes more fully a woman, because she has grown more fully conscious, more pleasure-loving, freer from restraints. In her body, which she has hitherto regarded with indifference, she now discovers new and surprising sources of delight. For the first time, beneath the veil of shame she sees the beauty of her own femininity. A master spendthrift has taught her how to spend, how to give pleasure for pleasure, and not to ask for any meaning beyond that which she feels quickening in her senses. But it is not really he who has won the woman; her conquest has been effected by this joyfully accepted form of enjoyment. Hence new devotees of the faith become propagandists. A sister brings a sister to the altar, a mother hands her daughter over to this gentle teacher, every one of his mistresses invites others to join in the dance. Just as the sisterhood of women, in one of its manifestations, leads each of Don Juan's victims to warn (how vainly!) her sisters against the enemy of their sex, so does this same sense of sisterhood, in another of its manifestations, make the women who have been loved by Casanova proclaim him as the man who showers divine blessings on their sex. Just as he, when he loves a woman, loves in her woman as a whole, so do women love in him the symbol of the loving man and master.

As conqueror, then, Casanova is not a magician, not a wonder-worker in the realm of love. His powers of conquest are nature personified, they are nature's kindly powers; and the secret of his success is his amazing virility. Thoroughly natural in his desires, perfectly straight-

forward in his sensuality, he brings into love an admirable common sense, an accurate vital balance. He does not lift women to the level of saints, nor does he lower them to that of demons; he merely desires them on the earthly plane as companions in the game of love, as the god-given complements of male energy and desire. Although a more ardent being than all the lyric poets, he never exaggerates the idea of love to make of it the essential meaning of the world, for whose sake the stars circle round our little globe, for whose sake the seasons wax and wane, for whose sake mankind breathes and dies; never, like the pious Novalis, does he make of love the "Amen of the universe." With Hellenic frankness he looks upon Eros as nothing more and nothing less than the most entrancing enjoyment earth has to offer. Thus does Casanova bring love down out of imaginary heavens, down into the life of this world, where he can enjoy it in the person of every woman who has the courage and the will for joy. At the very time when Rousseau the Frenchman was discovering sentimentalism in love, and when Werther the German was discovering enthusiastic melancholy, Casanova the Italian was, by the impetus of his life, demonstrating the pagan cheerfulness of love to be the best helper in the ever necessary work of freeing the world from its burdens.

YEARS IN OBSCURITY

How often in my life have I done something which was repugnant to me, and which I could not understand. But I was driven onward by a secret power, which, wittingly, I was unable to resist.

CASANOVA, IN THE MEMOIRS

You have no right to blame women for surrendering so easily to the great seducer. Every woman who encounters him falls into temptation, and is ready to be enthralled by the fiery charm of his art of life. Let us admit the fact that it is hard for a man to read Casanova's memoirs without envy. Who is there, engaged in routine occupations in this fenced and specializing century of ours, who is not seized from time to time by the spirit of adventure? In such moments, our thoughts turn to the mad doings of this arch-adventurer; his life filled full of snatchings and enjoyments, his thoroughgoing epicureanism, seem to us wiser and more real than our own orderly preoccupation with the things of the spirit; his philosophy seems more vital than the peevish doctrines of Schopenhauer or the cold dogmatism of Kant. What a poor thing at such moments appears our existence, safeguarded only by renunciation, when compared with his! It is with a sore heart that we recognize all we are paying for our spiritual poise and our life of moral endeavour—we are paying for it in restraints!

Such is our fate. In so far as we try to look beyond

the fleeting hour and to direct our endeavours towards some future aim, we deprive this present hour of some of its vitality; and in so far as we seek to transcend the present, we rob ourselves of present enjoyment. We look before and after, and the ball-and-chain of conscience clanks at our heels as we walk. We have surrendered ourselves as prisoners to our own selves, and that is why we are so heavy-footed. But Casanova is light-hearted and light-footed; he makes all women his own; he speeds across all lands; he drifts before the winds of chance through all the heavens and all the hells. No real man, therefore, I repeat, can read Casanova's memoirs in certain moods without feeling envious, without feeling himself to be a bungler as compared with this master of the art of life. Often—again and again and again—one would rather be Casanova than be Goethe, Michelangelo, or Balzac. Smile though we may, a little cynically, at the literary affectations and the rodomontade of this philosophically draped rascal, nevertheless in the sixth, the tenth, the twelfth volume we are often inclined to regard him as the wisest man in the world, and to look upon his philosophy of superficiality as the shrewdest and most entrancing of all doctrines.

Fortunately Casanova himself cures our prompting towards undue admiration. His register of the art of life has one serious flaw in it—he has forgotten old age. An epicurean technique of enjoyment, a technique entirely concerned with the sensual, the palpable, is exclusively based upon young and vigorous senses, upon the circulation of a young and vigorous bodily sap. As soon as the flame of life ceases to burn with youthful ardour, the whole philosophy of sensual pleasure will be found to have become an insipid, unpalatable broth. Only with

tense muscles, with firm, white teeth, can we master life in Casanova's fashion. Woe to the epicurean when the muscles grow flaccid, when the teeth begin to fall out, when the senses lose their keenness; for then this agreeable, this comfortable philosophy will certainly be found to have lost its savour. In the man of pleasure (I use that term in its cruder sense), the curve of existence is inevitably a declining one. The spendthrift has no reserves, he squanders his substance in riotous living; whereas the man of the spirit, ostensibly practising renunciation, is really storing up an ample supply of energy in an accumulator. One who has devoted himself to the things of the spirit will, even in his declining years, and often (like Goethe) at a patriarchal age, be able to experience transformations, sublimations, purifications, and transfigurations. Though his blood has cooled, his life can still rise to dizzy heights of intellectual experience; and the bold play of his thoughts compensates him for the reduced intensity of bodily function. The man who has lived only for the pleasures of the senses, on the other hand, the man to whom nothing can appeal but corporeal impacts from without, sticks fast in old age like a water-wheel when the brook that should turn it has dried up. For him, to grow old is a decline into nullity instead of a transition to novelty. Life, an inexorable creditor, demands back from him with interest what his uncontrolled senses have spent too early and too quickly. Thus it is that Casanova's wisdom ends with his happiness, his happiness with his youth. He only seems wise as long as he is handsome, victorious, and in the full possession of his bodily energies. You may envy him until he is forty years of age, but you can only pity him for the rest of his life.

Casanova's carnival, the most brightly coloured of any

ever celebrated in Venice, ends prematurely and sadly upon a sombre Ash Wednesday. We watch the shadows slowly creeping athwart his narrative, just as wrinkles form upon an ageing face. He has fewer and fewer triumphs to report, and more and more vexations to record. We find an ever more frequent mention of disagreeables (for which, of course, he is never to blame) in connection with spurious bills of exchange, false banknotes, pawned jewels; and we read less often of visits to princely courts. From London, he finds it necessary to steal away by night and in a fog, to escape the arrest that would have been inevitable a few hours later, and would have been a prelude to the gallows. From Warsaw, he is hunted away like a criminal. He is expelled both from Vienna and from Madrid. In Barcelona, he spends forty days under lock and key. Florence gives him notice to quit. In Paris, he receives a "lettre de cachet," and has no choice but to leave the beloved city. Casanova is unwanted, is as unwelcome as a louse.

We are puzzled, at first, and ask ourselves what can be amiss that, of a sudden, the world should prove so ungracious to its former favourite, should talk so much about good morals. Has there been a change for the worse in his character, that people should cold-shoulder him in this way? No, he is the same as ever, is what he will be to the end of the chapter. He has always been a humbug. What is wrong with him is that he is beginning to lack self-confidence, the victorious self-confidence of youth. Where he has sinned most, there he finds his punishment. The women are the first to forsake their darling. A poor, pitiful little Delilah inflicts a terrible wound upon this Samson in the lists of love—(a crafty, good-for-nothing baggage, Charpillon by name, in Lon-

don). This episode, the most effectively narrated of all in his memoirs, sketched with perfect artistry, is the turning-point. For the first time the experienced seducer is tricked by a woman, and not by a woman of standing, inaccessible, virtuous, and therefore refusing her favours, but by a spiteful little harlot, who makes him crazy with desire, strips him of his last coin, and refuses to allow him to lay so much as a finger upon her lecherous body. A Casanova who is contemptuously rejected though he pays and overpays; a Casanova despised, and compelled to look on while an impudent young fellow, a hairdresser's assistant, is made happy by the possession of all that he vainly covets and has paid for in hard coin—this is Casanova, wounded to the quick in his tenderest place, his vanity; and thenceforward he can never feel confident. Prematurely, when he is forty years of age, he is terrified to discover that the motor upon which his victorious progress through the world has depended is no longer working properly, and he becomes afraid that his progress will soon be arrested. "What troubled me most of all was that I must perforce admit the beginnings of that loss of power which is associated with the oncoming of age. I no longer had the careless confidence of youth." A Casanova without self-confidence, a Casanova without the overwhelming virility which has hitherto charmed women, lacking beauty and potency and money, no longer able to plume himself on being the darling both of Priapus and of Fortuna—what is he, now that he has lost this trump card?

Here is his own description: "A man of a certain age, to whom luck has become a stranger, and towards whom women have grown cold. A bird without wings, a man without virility, a lover without a mistress, a gambler

without money to stake, a tired frame without tension or beauty." No longer does he sound triumphal peals, or proclaim the exclusive wisdom of enjoyment; for the first time the dangerous word "renunciation" finds expression in his philosophy. "The days when I made women in love with me are over; I must either renounce them, or else buy their favours." Renunciation, the most incredible thought for a Casanova, has become terribly real to him. He cannot buy women without money; yet it has always been women who have kept him in funds. The wonderful circulation has come to an end, the game is finished, and life has become a serious matter for the master of all adventurers. That is why the ageing Casanova, poor Casanova, from being a man of pleasure becomes a parasite, from being a man interested in the world for its own sake becomes a spy, from being a gambler becomes a cheat and a beggar; that is why the boon companion becomes a forlorn scribbler who is always quarrelling with his housemates.

A distressing spectacle! Casanova lays down his arms. The veteran of countless love battles grows cautious and modest. Quietly and sadly the great "commediante in fortuna" retires from the stage where he has had such splendid successes. He doffs his fine clothes as "no longer suitable to my position"; takes off his ring and his diamond shoebuckles, discarding therewith his glorious arrogance; throws his philosophy under the table like a worn pack of cards; bows his neck beneath the yoke, submitting himself to the law in virtue of which withered prostitutes become procuresses, gamblers become cardsharpers, adventurers become toadies. Now that the blood has ceased to course warmly through his veins, the sometime "citoyen du monde" begins to shiver, and to suffer from

homesickness. Putting his pride in his pocket, repenting him of his offences, he begs the Venetian government for forgiveness. He writes lickspittle reports to the inquisitors, composes a patriotic booklet, a "refutatione" of the attacks on the Venetian government, in which he is not ashamed to declare that the Leads, where he had pined in prison, are "a well-ventilated place," an earthly paradise. Of these distressing episodes, there is no word in the memoirs, which end prematurely, and tell the reader nothing about the years of shame. He shrouds them in obscurity, lest he should blush; and we are inclined to congratulate ourselves for this, seeing that Casanova the toady, Casanova the police spy, conflicts too painfully with the doughty warrior of earlier days.

Thus for a few years there slinks across the Merceria a corpulent and rubicund man, who is no longer fashionably dressed. He listens attentively to all that the Venetians are saying, sits in taverns watching suspicious characters, and in the evenings writes tedious reports to the inquisitors. They are signed "Angelo Pratolini," the alias of a pardoned ex-convict, who for a few gold pieces is willing to send others to the prison in which he himself had been confined in youth, the prison whose description has made him famous. Casanova, chevalier de Seingalt, the darling of women, the victorious seducer, has become Angelo Pratolini, informer and nark; the fingers that were once adorned with diamonds are now busied in writing sordid denunciations, in sprinkling ink and gall venomously to right and to left, until even Venice wearies of his complaints and expels him from its precincts.

Information is scanty as concerns Casanova's life during the next few years. Upon what gloomy seas did the

wreck drift until it was at length cast ashore in Bohemia? The elderly adventurer still wandered to and fro across Europe, making trial of his customary arts in the hope of extracting money from the rich and the noble—card-sharper, cabalist, and pimp, as of yore. Alas, the favouring gods of his youth, his impudence, his self-confidence, had abandoned him; women laughed at his wrinkled face, and he was hard put to it to get a living. He became secretary (probably a euphemism for spy) at the embassy in Vienna; and there is evidence of expulsion from a number of towns. In Vienna, at long last, he designed to marry a street-walker, that the earnings of her sorry but lucrative trade might provide him with the wherewithal to live; this excellent scheme came to nothing. At length Count Waldstein, a man fabulously rich, with a taste for the occult, came across Casanova in Paris, and took pity on him, charmed by the derelict's cynical volubility. He invited the adventurer to Dux as librarian, which meant court jester. Waldstein bought Casanova as he would have bought any other curio, paying for this one a thousand gulden a year—a salary which was always pledged in advance to Casanova's creditors. At Dux the old man lived, or rather died, for thirteen years.

After a long period of obscurity, he once more becomes plainly visible. He is Casanova again, or at any rate something which vaguely reminds us of Casanova. He is Casanova's mummy, a withered vestige, pickled in his own gall, a strange specimen which the count shows to guests. They look upon him as an extinct crater, entertaining, no longer dangerous, lively and amusing after the southland fashion, but slowly perishing of boredom in this Bohemian eyrie. Yet for the last time Casanova

fools the world. While all think him utterly outworn, dead to life and a candidate for the cemetery, he makes a new life for himself out of his memories, and, in a supreme venture, ensures for himself immortality.

LIKENESS OF CASANOVA IN OLD AGE

Altera nunc rerum facies, me quaero,
nec adsum,
Non sum, qui fueram, non putor esse:
fui.

INSCRIPTION BENEATH CASANOVA'S PORTRAIT AT THE AGE OF SIXTY-THREE

We are in the years 1797 and 1798. The bloodstained besom of the revolution has been sweeping up the debris of the gallant century; the heads of His Most Christian Majesty and of Queen Marie Antoinette have fallen into the basket of the guillotine; and now a little general from Corsica has made short work of dozens of petty princes, the Venetian inquisitors not excepted. Nobody is reading the Encyclopædia any longer, or the writings of Voltaire and Rousseau, for interest is concentrated upon the bulletins from the seat of war. Europe is a sober place; carnival days are over, and with them have vanished rococo, hooped petticoats, powdered wigs, silver shoe-buckles, and Brussels lace. Velvet coats are out of fashion; everyone who is not in uniform wears plain cloth. But here is a strange figure, an old fellow rusticating in an out-of-the-way corner of Bohemia, who seems to have taken no note of the passing of time. Like Herr Ritter Gluck in Hoffman's tale, he is decked out in all the colours of the rainbow, velvet waistcoat with gold buttons, neckcloth of worn and yellow lace, clocked stock-

ings, flowered garters, and white-plumed hat. In this rig, he leaves Castle Dux and makes his way over the cobble-stones into the town. He still wears a wig, carelessly powdered it is true (for he no longer has a servant), and he leans on a goldheaded cane such as might have been seen in the Palais Royal more than half a century before. Yes, it is really Casanova, or rather his mummy; he is still alive, despite poverty, manifold vexations, and syphilis. His skin is like parchment; his great hooked nose projects formidably over his thin-lipped, slavering mouth; his bushy brows are white; he exhales a stuffy aroma, as of dried gall and book-dust. But his eyes, black as pitch, have the old restless gleam, peering angrily from beneath the half-closed lids. Their expression is not a pleasant one, for he has been a peevish fellow ever since fortune cast him on to this Bohemian dung-hill. He vouchsafes scarcely a glance at the stupid townsfolk; they are hardly worth a civil greeting, these clownish fellows who have never been outside their native village. "What is there in common between them and myself, the Chevalier de Seingalt, who once fired a bullet into the august body of the court chamberlain of Poland, and who received the golden spurs from the pope's own hands?" Sad to relate, even the women do not respect him. They hold their hands in front of their mouths, to keep themselves from laughing at him openly. Still, it is better to walk abroad among these common folk than to sit at home among those blackguards of servants, "the blockheads whose kicks I have to endure"; Feltkirchner worst of all, the steward, and Widerholt, his tool. What brutes they are! On purpose, yesterday, they emptied the salt-cellar into the soup, and burned the macaroni; they tore his portrait out of his Icosameron, and hung it up in the

privy; they actually dared to whip the little bitch Melampyge which countess Roggendorf had given him, simply because the poor beast had misbehaved in one of the rooms. Oh for the good old days when one would have put such unruly servants in the stocks, or have been able to order them a sound flogging, instead of having to endure their insolence. But to-day, thanks to Robespierre, the canaille has the upper hand, the Jacobins have ruined everything, and he himself is nothing more than a poor old dog whose teeth are worn out. Well, well, what's the use of grumbling; he had better go back to his room and read Horace.

To-day his troubles are forgotten for the nonce, and the old mummy is bustling about in fine fettle. He has put on his threadbare court dress, and is wearing all his orders, for the count has personally informed him that his grace of Teplitz is coming, accompanied by the Prince de Ligne and other noblemen. They will talk French at table, and the envious pack of servants will have to stand behind his chair and treat him as one of the distinguished company, to hand him his food properly, instead of throwing it to him as one throws a bone to a dog. Yes, he will sit down to dinner at the big table among the Austrian noblemen, who know how to value sprightly conversation, how to listen to a philosopher whom even Voltaire respected, one who in former days was a welcome guest at the table of emperors and kings. Perhaps after the ladies have withdrawn, Count Waldstein and the Prince de Ligne will ask him to read a chapter from his interesting memoirs. He will probably comply—probably, not certainly, for he is not Count Waldstein's servant, and compelled to obey orders; he is a guest, a librarian, an equal. Anyhow, he will tell them one or two

good stories, in the style of his sometime teacher, Monsieur Crébillon; or one or two spicy tales of the Venetian sort. "We shall all be noblemen together, and shall understand the finer shades. We shall laugh merrily over our wine, a dark and heavy burgundy like that drunk at the court of His Most Christian Majesty; shall converse about war, alchemy, and books; and an elderly philosopher will certainly be able to impart a little of his wisdom concerning the world and women."

Greatly excited, he hobbles through the suite of rooms, looking like a withered and malicious bird, his eyes sparkling with arrogance and spite. He polishes up the spurious gems in the cross he is going to wear (the genuine stones have gone to the Jews long since); standing in front of the mirror, he practises bowing after the manner of the court of Louis XV. It is a pity that he has grown stiff, that his back creaks when he tries to bend it, but what can you expect when one has been driving in postchaises over the length and breadth of Europe for seventy years, and when the women have drained away one's sap? Still, the wits have not all run out of his brain-box; he will know how to make a good showing and to amuse the company. In the best handwriting he can achieve—it is rather tremulous, but still beautifully legible—he copies out on a piece of handmade paper a poem in the French tongue, a poem of welcome to the Princesse de Recke; and he paints a pompous dedication on the front of his new comedy for the amateur stage. Even while vegetating here in Dux, he has not forgotten the proprieties, and, as a gentleman, he knows how to greet an assembly of persons interested in literature.

Nor is he disappointed when the carriages drive up to the door, and, on his gouty feet, he stumps down the

steps to welcome the newcomers. While Count Waldstein and the guests toss their headgear and their cloaks to the servants, they embrace Casanova as a member of their own order, and to those who have not met him before he is presented as the famous Chevalier de Seingalt. There is talk of his literary merits, and the ladies vie with one another to have him sitting beside them at table. Even before the dishes have been cleared away, everything happens as he had foreseen. The Prince de Ligne asks how he is getting on with that extraordinarily interesting account of his life; and thereupon, with one voice, the ladies and gentlemen beg him to read them a chapter from the book. How can he refuse to comply with any wish of his benefactor, Count Waldstein? Casanova trots upstairs to his room, and from among the fifteen manuscript folios he selects the volume in which the marker lies. This contains the show piece, one of the few chapters it is safe to read in mixed company, the account of his escape from the Leads in Venice. He has related this incomparable adventure so often: to the Elector of Bavaria, to the Elector of Cologne, to men of high rank in England and in Poland. He will show them that a Casanova can write more spiritedly than that heavy Prussian Herr von Trenck, about whose escape from prison so much fuss has been made. Recently Casanova has introduced some fine new turns of phrase, has dwelt upon some remarkable complications, and has finished up with a most effective quotation from the divine Dante. The reading is a great success. There are salvos of applause; the count embraces him, and as he does so slips a rouleau of ducats into the old fellow's pocket. Well, Casanova can find a use for them! Though the world in general may have forgotten him, his creditors are well informed

as to his whereabouts! But he is sincerely touched by these attentions, and the tears actually course down his cheeks when the princess congratulates him in kindly words, and when all drink to the speedy completion of his masterpiece.

Next day, alas, the horses have been put to and are pawing the ground impatiently in the courtyard. The noble company is about to start for Prague, and, although the librarian has hinted more than once that he has urgent business in that city, no one offers him a lift. He must stay behind in the huge, cold, draughty castle, exposed to the insolence of the rabble of servants, who are ready to grin contemptuously at Casanova the instant Count Waldstein's back is turned. He is left alone among barbarians, not one of whom can speak French or Italian, not one of whom can converse about Ariosto and Jean-Jacques. He cannot spend all his time writing letters to the dry-as-dust Herr Opitz, in Czaslau, and to the small number of good-natured ladies who still keep up a correspondence with him. The spirit of boredom has once more taken possession of these uninhabited rooms, and the gout, which he had managed to forget yesterday, has returned in full force to-day. Grumpily Casanova takes off his court dress, and dons his thick Turkish dressing-gown; splenetically he sidles off to his last refuge, to his memories, to his writing-table. Carefully mended quills are waiting for him beside the blank folios on which he is to write. He sets himself to his task once more, and posterity may bless the tedium which induces him to write the story of his life.

For behind this death's-head countenance, behind this parchmenty skin, a vigorous memory has been preserved in excellent condition, like the flesh of a nut inside a hard

and wrinkled shell. All remains in good order within the brain-box betwixt forehead and occiput. The sparkling eyes, the eager nostrils, the clutching hands, the gouty fingers—his memory retains all that they have seen, all that they have handled, in a thousand adventures; can recall every detail of the smooth feminine bodies which the fingers had once so ardently caressed. Now the fingers set themselves to writing of these things for thirteen hours at a stretch ("thirteen hours which pass in a flash as if they had been thirteen minutes"). Lying on the table is a medley of the faded letters from his sometime mistresses, mementos, locks of hair, all kinds of relics; and just as a silvery smoke will still rise above the embers when the flames are quenched, so an invisible cloud of delicate aroma hovers over the ancient memorials. Every embrace, every kiss, every surrender, is called up to play its part in the phantasmagoria; and this conjuration of the past is not work but play, "Le plaisir de se souvenir ces plaisirs." The old man's eyes shine brightly; his lips twitch in his excitement; he mutters to himself as he reshapes dialogues, involuntarily mimicking his inamoratas' voices, and laughing as he retells his own jests. He forgets to eat and to drink; forgets his poverty, his lowly situation, and his impotence; forgets the sorrows and ignominies of his old age. In this dream life, he has grown young once again; Henriette, Babette, and Thérèse, the shades he has summoned from the dead, are smiling on him again, and perhaps he enjoys their necromantic presence even more than he enjoyed them in the flesh. He writes and writes, an adventurer with the pen as aforetime he was an adventurer with his whole ardent body; he paces up and down the room, reading over to himself what he has written, laughing heartily, self-forgetful.

His enemies the servants have gathered round the door, wonderingly, eavesdropping. They grin at one another, and say: "To whom is he chattering, with whom is he laughing, the old fool?" Tapping their foreheads significantly, they clatter downstairs again to their wine, and leave Casanova to himself in his garret. The outer world has forgotten him. The angry old eagle, alone in his eyrie at Dux, might almost as well be living on the top of an iceberg. When at length, at the end of June, 1798, his tired heart has ceased to beat, and the poor, withered frame which had once been so ardently embraced by a thousand women is committed to the tomb, the church register cannot even get his name right. "Casaneus, Venetian, 84 years of age," is the entry; wrong name, wrong age, so little do those among whom he has lived for years, and among whom he has now died, know of him. No one troubles to erect a monument, and no one pays any heed to his manuscripts. While the body moulders in an unnamed grave, the letters crumble, and even thievish hands are not interested enough to open or to steal the folio volumes of his memoirs. From 1798 to 1822, for a quarter of a century, no one could have seemed more hopelessly dead than this most living of all the men that ever lived.

GENIUS FOR SELF-PORTRAITURE

Courage is the one thing needful.

PREFACE TO THE MEMOIRS

His life had been adventurous, and his resurrection was to be the same. On December 13, 1820 (who, at that date, remembered Casanova?) the famous publishing firm of Brockhaus received a letter from an unknown correspondent named Gentzel, inquiring whether the *Histoire de ma vie jusqu'à l'an 1797* by a certain Signor Casanova would be acceptable for publication. Brockhaus asked Gentzel to send along the folios, and secured an expert opinion on them. You may imagine that they created a sensation! The manuscript was instantly purchased, was translated into German, abominably mutilated one may presume, plastered over with fig-leaves, and adjusted for public consumption. By the time the fourth volume appeared, the success had been so tremendous that a Parisian pirate retranslated the German translation into French, the work being thus mauled a second time. Thereupon Brockhaus, with an eye to his own profits, shot a second French retranslation after the first. In a word, Giacomo, the rejuvenated, had come to life again. He now enjoys a vigorous reincarnation in all the towns he ever visited—but his original manuscript is solemnly entombed in Herr Brockhaus' safe, and only God and Brockhaus know through what devious and thievish paths the volumes wandered during their three-and-twenty years of incognito, or how much of their precious con-

tents has been lost, mutilated, castrated, falsified. In the genuine Casanova style, the whole affair reeks of mystery, adventure, dishonesty. Still, all these drawbacks notwithstanding, we can congratulate ourselves on the miracle of possessing the most impudent and racy picaresque romance of all ages!

Casanova himself had never seriously believed in the public appearance of this monster. "For seven years I have been doing nothing else than write my memoirs," confesses the gouty old hermit on one occasion, "and it has gradually become a necessity for me to carry the matter through to an end, although I greatly regret having undertaken it. But I write in the hope that my history will never see the light. Apart from the fact that the censorship, that extinguisher of the intellect, would never allow it to be printed, I look forward to being rational enough in my last illness to have all the manuscript burnt before my eyes." Fortunately he remained true to himself, and therefore never became "rational." What he once spoke of as his capacity for "secondary blushing," for blushing at his inability to blush, did not prevent his taking up his pen, and, in his fair, round hand, writing folio after folio for twelve hours a day. He said of this occupation: "It was the only way in which I could hinder myself from becoming crazy, or from dying of the spleen —of vexation on account of the disagreeables and annoyances I had to suffer daily at the hands of the envious brutes who lived under the same roof with me in Count Waldstein's castle."

As fly-flapper to ward off boredom, a remedy against intellectual ossification—surely this is a strange motive, the objector will exclaim, for the writing of one's memoirs. But it would be a mistake to underrate the impor-

tance of tedium as an incentive to literary creation. We have to thank the weary years spent in prison by Cervantes for the boon of Don Quixote; the best pages written by Stendhal were penned during his exile in the marshes of Civita Vecchia; even Dante's *Divine Comedy* might never have come into being but for the author's banishment, for had he stayed in Florence he would have written in blood with sword and battle-ax instead of committing his thoughts to rhyme. The most brightly-coloured pictures of life can only be fashioned in a camera oscura. Had Count Waldstein taken the worthy Giacomo with him to Paris or to Vienna, fed him there on the fat of the land and allowed him to smell the flesh of women, had he been fêted as a wit in all the drawing-rooms, these wonderful narratives would never have got beyond the stage of talk over chocolate and sherbet, would never have achieved permanent incorporation in black and white. Like Ovid beside the shores of the Euxine, the old fellow sat alone and shivering in his Bohemian exile, and there told his story like one looking back on life out of the realm of the shades. His friends were dead, his adventures had been forgotten, his senses had ceased to glow. A neglected ghost, he wandered through the chilly rooms of the castle. No woman came to visit him; no one had any respect for him; no one wanted to hear him talk. The venerable sorcerer, therefore, wishing to prove, to himself at least, that he was still alive, or at any rate had lived ("vixi, ergo sum"), exerted his cabalistic arts once more to conjure up the past, recounted for his present enjoyment the enjoyments of days long dead. Hungry men lacking money to buy food must feast upon the odour of roast meat; victims on the field of war and the field of Venus must content themselves as

best they may with telling the story of their adventures. "I renew the pleasure by reminding myself of it, and I can laugh at past distresses since I can no longer feel their smart."

Casanova's sole purpose in operating this peepshow, this old man's toy, is to please himself; he wants his vivid memories to distract his attention from the dull present. It is this negative element of absolute aloofness and unconcern which gives his work its peculiar psychological value as self-portraiture. Generally speaking, when anyone tells the story of his own life, he does it purposively, and somewhat theatrically. He puts himself on a stage, is aware of the audience, unconsciously adopts some particular attitude, poses as an interesting character, calculates the effects of every gesture. Benjamin Franklin writes his autobiography as a work of edification; Bismarck, as a historical document; Jean-Jacques Rousseau, to make a sensation; Goethe, as a work of art and an imaginative exercise; Napoleon on St. Helena, as a justification and as a monument. They all expect the work of self-portraiture to have a specific influence in the moral, historical, or literary field and for every one of them this conviction imposes a burden or exercises a restraint in the form of a sense of responsibility. Famous men are never free from fears and scruples when writing autobiography, for they know that their self-portrait will be confronted with a portrait that already exists in the imaginations or experiences of countless fellow-men. Willy-nilly, therefore, they are compelled to adapt the autobiography to the preformed legend. Being famous, for the sake of their fame they are constrained to have regard to their country, their children, morality, honour. Instinctively they watch the image of their personality

that has shaped itself in the minds of their contemporaries; and one who already belongs to the public is bound by many ties.

Casanova, on the other hand, can enjoy the luxury of absolute freedom from restrictions, and can indulge in the impudence of anonymity. He is under obligations to no one, has no ties, either to the past, which has forgotten him, or to the future, in which he does not believe. He is not troubled by any considerations for family feeling, by any thought of morality, by any circumstantial hindrances. His children, if he has any, have been hatched out of cuckoos' eggs laid in strange nests. The women who gave themselves to him in the days of his youth have been mouldering long since in Italian, Spanish, English, or German earth. He has no fatherland, no home, no religion. Whose feelings need he consider? What he has to tell can no longer advantage him in any way; nor can it harm him, since for practical purposes he is a dead man, is beyond good and evil, beyond respect and contempt, beyond approval and disapproval, expunged from men's memories, a dead star, or one which glows only in its hidden core. "Why should I not tell the truth? A man cannot deceive himself, and I am writing for myself alone."

But when Casanova speaks of telling the truth, he does not imply a determination to drive mine-shafts into his own interior, to disclose psychological depths. He means no more than that he will have no inhibitions, no shame. He will strip off his clothes, and, comfortably naked, will warm his body once again in the stream of sensuality, will splash cheerfully in the current of memories, taking no heed of the presence of actual or imaginary spectators. He does not recount his adventures like

a literary man, a soldier, or a poet, like one who talks for his own honour and glory; he writes in the spirit in which a bravo vaunts the murders he has committed, or a poor old harlot tells of her hours of love—with no thought of shame. "Non erubesco evangelium," I do not blush at my confessions, such is the motto written underneath his "Précis de ma vie," the first draft of his memoirs. He tells his story simply and directly. Thus while he may seem coarse at times, writing as frankly as Lucian, and (like a vain athlete showing off his muscle) making too public a display of his phallic activities—assuredly this shameless parade is far more to our taste than the cowardly furtiveness of a weak-loined galanterie in eroticis. Look, for contrast, at the other erotic treatises of his day; at the rose-tinted, musk-smelling frivolities of a Grécourt, a Crébillon, or at Louvet de Couvray's *Faublas*, in which Eros is draped as a shepherd-boy and love is displayed as a lascivious chassé-croisé, a gallant amusement, in which one neither procreates children nor catches syphilis. In Casanova's memoirs we have nothing of this sort; we have precise descriptions of the wholesome and exuberant joys of a vigorous man of the senses, whose elemental virility and elemental naturalness we can fully appreciate. In Casanova, masculine love is not depicted as a delicate, gently flowing rivulet in which sportive nymphs can cool their feet; but as a mighty river, reflecting the world in its surface, and at the same time sweeping along in its depths all the slime and foulness of existence. Assuredly no other autobiographer can rival him in his limning of the Pan-like intensity of the male sexual impulse. At length we find someone with courage enough to disclose the intermingling of flesh and spirit in masculine love; with courage enough to describe, not

only sentimental amourettes, but also the adventures of the brothel, stark-naked and skin-deep sexuality; the whole labyrinth of sex, through which every real man threads his way.

Not that the other great autobiographies, like those of Goethe or Rousseau, are positively unveracious. But there is a falsehood that finds expression in telling only half the tale, and there is a falsehood that takes the form of concealment. Now both Goethe and Rousseau (like all autobiographers, with the possible exception of the bold Hans Jaeger) are careful (deliberately or forgetfully) to avoid saying a word about the less appetizing, the purely sexual episodes of their amatory life. They dwell exclusively upon spiritualized, sentimentalized love affairs with Claras and Gretchens. They tell us only of those women who, mentally as well as physically, are reasonably clean, are persons with whom they would not be ashamed to walk arm-in-arm down Main Street. The other women with whom our autobiographers have had carnal relations are kept carefully out of the way in dark alleys and in two-pair backs. Thus, unconsciously of course, these writers falsify the picture of masculine eroticism. Goethe, Tolstoy, even Stendhal who in other respects is no prude, having uneasy consciences, skate swiftly over the thin ice. They tell us nothing of their numerous encounters with Venus Vulgivaga, the earthly, all-too-earthly love. Were it not for the splendidly shameless Casanova, who boldly draws back all the curtains and lets us look freely into his inner rooms, world literature would lack a thoroughly plain and straightforward account of the complexities of masculine sexuality. In Casanova we are shown the whole sexual mechanism of the senses at work; we are shown the world

of the flesh even in its miry and marshy parts; we are allowed to glimpse its abysses. This idler, adventurer, cardsharper, rogue, shows more straightforwardness than the greatest of our writers, for he presents the world as a conglomerate of beauty and ugliness, of refined spirit and gross sexuality; and he does not pretend that it is nothing more than an idealized, chemically purified entity. In sexual matters, Casanova does not merely tell the truth, but (how immense is the difference) the whole truth. His love world is true to reality.

Casanova true? I hear the academicians stirring indignantly in their chairs. For the last fifty years they have been directing a machine-gun fire at his historical blunders, and they have caught him out in many an outrageous falsehood. Gently, brothers, gently! No doubt Casanova was an accomplished cardsharper, was a habitual liar, was a professor of rodomontade. In his memoirs he arranges his cards here and there, "il corrige la fortune," being an irreclaimable swindler, with a taste for giving lame chance a leg-up. He adorns, garnishes, peppers, spices his aphrodisiac ragout, mingling therein all the ingredients of an imagination inflamed by abstinence. Often he does this automatically, without being aware of it. We must remember that in course of time embellishments and even falsehoods are justified by memory, so that in the end a genuine fabulist can no longer be certain what parts of his story are fact and what fiction. Casanova, be it remembered, was a rhapsodist. He paid for his invitations to dine at great men's tables by being a good conversationalist, by recounting strange adventures. Just as court singers of old intensified interest by interweaving new and ever new episodes into their lays, so was he constrained to put a fresh romantic gloss upon

successive recitals of his adventures. For instance, every time he had to retell the story of his escape from the Leads it was expedient to heighten the interest by a further exaggeration of the risks, and he thus continually found himself at a greater remove from the actual facts. He, poor fellow, could never have anticipated that more than a century after his death the members of a sort of historical Casanova Police Force would be busily engaged in combing through a mass of documents, letters, archives, in order to check every detail in his memoirs, and in order, with the ruler of science, to rap him on the knuckles for every mistake in a date.

No doubt his dates are not altogether reliable. As for his anecdotes, quite a number of them, when closely examined, collapse like a house of cards. For instance, it has been proved to-day, almost beyond doubt, that the romantic adventures in Constantinople were nothing more than a voluptuous dream of the old gentleman at Dux, and that he had quite gratuitously introduced poor Cardinal de Bernis as lover and voyeur into the story of his liaison with the pretty nun M. M. He reports meetings in Paris and London with persons who are positively known to have been elsewhere at the time; he gives a date ten years too early for the death of the Marchioness of Urfé, because her presence on the stage had become inconvenient to him; in a single hour, when plunged in thought, he walks from Zurich to Kloster Einsiedeln—thus covering a distance of thirty-one kilometres with the speed of a modern motor-car. Certainly you must not expect to find in him a fanatical zeal for truth in matters of detail, you must not consult him as a trustworthy historian. The more we scrutinize Casanova's statements in these little matters, the more frequent and the more

flagrant are the minor errors we discover. But all these petty falsifications, chronological mistakes, mystifications, and vapourings, these arbitrary and often extremely natural errors of omission, count for nothing as compared with the uncompromising and positively unique veracity of the autobiography as a whole. No doubt Casanova has made free use of the artist's incontestable right to compress space and time in order to make incidents more picturesquely intelligible; but nothing of this sort affects the straightforward, frank, and luminous way in which he contemplates his life and his epoch as a whole. It is not Casanova alone, but the century to which he belongs, that are staged vividly before us. In dramatic episodes, electrifying in their contrasts, he exhibits all strata of society, of nations, of scenes, and paints for us a picture of eighteenth century morals and immorals unrivalled in literature.

At first sight you may regard it as a defect that he does not plumb the depths; and that he does not, like Stendhal or Goethe, view things from a height whence he can secure a general intellectual view of national peculiarities. But for the very reason that his outlook is a superficial one, that he stands within the ambit of the events he describes, looking inquisitively to right and to left of him, his method of contemplation makes his account so valuable a document to the historian of civilization. Certainly, Casanova does not disclose the conceptual roots of the life amid which he lives, and is therefore unable to explain the totality of the phenomena he describes. He is content to leave everything as he finds it, higgledy-piggledy, the sport of chance, without any attempt to assort, to crystallize. For him everything is equally important, so long as it amuses him—that was the only

standard by which he and his associates judged. He knows neither large nor small in the world of thought or in the world of things; has no knowledge of good and evil. That is why he describes his conversation with Frederick the Great in exactly the same tone, and with exactly the same amount of detail, as, ten pages earlier, he has described a conversation with a harlot; that is why he has, and expects you to have, just as much interest in a Paris brothel as in Empress Catherine's Winter Palace. How many hundred ducats he has won at faro, or how many times in a single night he was able to prove his virility with Dubois or with Hélène, is no less momentous to Casanova than are the details of his talk with Monsieur de Voltaire. For him nothing in the world has any moral or æsthetic significance, and therefore he remains perfectly natural, perfectly at his ease, whatever he is telling us. If Casanova's memoirs, intellectually considered, may seem no more than a commonplace story of travel through the interesting landscapes of life, this is as much as to say that there is no philosophy in them; but their very lack in this respect has made of them a historical Baedeker, an eighteenth century *Cortigiano*, and an amusing "chronique scandaleuse," a most effective cross-section from the everyday life of a century.

It is thanks to Casanova, in large measure, that we know so much of the daily life of the eighteenth century; of its balls, its theatres, coffee houses, festivals, inns, dining halls, brothels, hunting parties, monasteries, nunneries, and fortresses. Thanks to him we know how people travelled, fed, gamed, danced, lived, loved, amused themselves; we know their manners and customs, their ways of speech. Superadded to this abundance of facts, to this wealth of practical details, we have a tumultuous

assembly of human personalities, enough to fill twenty novels and to supply ten generations of novelists. Look at them: soldiers and princes, popes and kings, cheats and cardsharpers, merchants and lawyers, castrati, souteneurs, women of all sorts and stations, authors and philosophers, the wise and the foolish—assuredly it is the best-stocked menagerie of human beings that any one writer has ever packed into the enclosure of a single book. None the less, each of the figures on his canvas has an unexplored interior. Casanova once said, writing to Opitz, that he lacked a talent for psychology, that he could not "discern inner physiognomies." We need not be surprised, therefore, that countless imaginative writers of later generations have drawn their must from this southland vineyard. Hundreds of novels and plays owe to Casanova their best characters and their most likely situations. Nor is the quarry exhausted. Just as ten generations have taken from the Forum stone for new buildings, so for generations yet to come will writers borrow material from this arch-spendthrift.

But the supreme character in his book—never to be forgotten, and already within a century become proverbial —is Casanova himself, that strange cross between Renaissance adventurer and modern swell-mobsman, that amazing creature who was rascal and genius rolled into one. People will never cease to take delight in the study of his personality. As challengingly erect as the bronze equestrian statue of his fellow-Venetian Colleoni, he stands sturdily planted in the midst of life, looking down through the centuries, indifferent to mockery or blame. Shamelessly he has displayed himself to the world, so that we know better than we know our own brothers this titanic, unwearied fragment of mankind. We should waste

our time were we to look for psychological depths, to seek backgrounds and hidden abysses; Casanova has nothing of the kind to reveal. There is no rouge on his face, and he is unbuttoned down to the cod-piece of his breeches. Without ceremony, without restraint, without ambiguity, he takes the reader comfortably by the arm, reveals all his privacies, whether of bed or board, whether of gaming table or alchemist's hocus-pocus. He laughingly displays himself in the most delicate situations, and he does so, not in an exhibitionist spirit, not under stress of a morbid Candaules perversion, but naïvely, with the inborn and bewitching grace of a child of nature, who has been in paradise, has seen there the naked Eve, and has not eaten of the apple which brings a knowledge of good and evil.

Here, as always, simplicity, ingenuousness, explains the perfection with which he tells his tale. The most skilful psychologist, the most practised writer, cannot make of Casanova a more live figure than he makes of himself in virtue of his absolute, unreflecting nonchalance. He stands before our eyes in all sorts of situations. We see him in anger, when his face flushes, when his white teeth are clenched, when his mouth is bitter as gall; we see him in danger, bold, alert, smiling contemptuously, with a steady hand on the hilt of his sword. We see him in good society; vain, boastful, self-possessed, talking easily, voluptuously appraising the charms of women. Whether as a handsome stripling or as a toothless ruin, he is always vividly presented to us. When we read his memoirs, we feel as if he were actually before us; and we are sure that if this man, dead long since, were to come suddenly round the corner, we should recognize him in a moment—though we know him only through a self-portrait limned by one who was neither a professional author nor a psy-

chologist. Goethe's Werther, Kleist's Kohlhaas, Jean-Jacques Rousseau's Saint-Preux and Héloïse—not one of the figures made real to us by these great writers is so real as the self-portrayed Casanova.

It is of no use, therefore, to turn up your nose at his equivocal talent, or to put on moral airs because of his scapegrace behaviour, or to hold him to account for his banalities and ignorant plagiarisms in matters philosophical. Despite all you can do, despite all the objections you can raise, Giacomo Casanova has taken his place in world literature, beside the gallows-bird Villon, and various other rogues, who will outlive countless thoroughly reputable authors and critics. As when he was alive, so after his death, he has reduced to absurdity all the accepted laws of æsthetics, and has thrown the moral catechism into the waste-paper basket. The growth and the persistence of his reputation show that a man need not be especially gifted, industrious, well-behaved, noble-minded, and sublime, in order to make his way into the temple of literary immortality. Casanova has proved that one may write the most amusing story in the world without being a novelist, and may give the most admirable picture of the time without being a historian; for in the last resort we judge these matters, not by the method but by the effect, not by the morality but by the power. Any thoroughly adequate feeling may be productive, shamelessness just as much as shame, characterlessness just as much as character, evil just as much as good, morality just as much as immorality. What decides whether a man will become immortal, is not his character but his vitality. Nothing save intensity confers immortality. A man manifests himself more vividly, in proportion as he is strong and uni-

fied, effective and unique. Immortality knows nothing of morality or immorality, of good or evil; it measures only work and strength; it demands from a man not purity but unity. Here, morality is nothing; intensity, all.

STENDHAL
(1783–1842)

Qu'ai-je été? Que suis-je? Je serais bien embarrassé de le dire.

STENDHAL: VIE DE HENRI BRULARD

LOVE OF FALSEHOOD AND DELIGHT IN TRUTH

I should much prefer to wear a mask and to change my name.

FROM A LETTER

FEW have lied more arrantly or quizzed the world with greater delight than Stendhal; few have told the truth to better advantage or with more profundity than he.

His subterfuges and mystifications are legion. When we take up one of his books, we are faced with a riddle before ever we open it, and after reading the preface we are still puzzled, for the author never gives his name simply and straightforwardly as Henri Beyle. At one moment he arbitrarily assumes a title of nobility, at another he becomes "César Bombet," or he adds the enigmatic letters A. A. to his initials, leaving the reader to find out for himself that they represent the words "ancien auditeur." He can feel at ease only under the cloak of a pseudonym. We meet him at times as "an Austrian pensioner," or, again, as "un ancien officier de cavalerie." But his favourite guise, the one that has most perplexed his fellow countrymen, is Stendhal. This is the name of an obscure village in Prussia which has thus obtained immortal renown through the whimsical humour of a Puckish wit. If he gives a date, we may be sure it is a wrong one. He tells us in the foreword to *La Chartreuse de Parme* that the novel was written "during the winter of

1830, three hundred leagues from Paris." This quip will not alter the fact that the said work was actually penned during the year 1839 in the very heart of the capital. Even actual facts are distorted. For instance, in his autobiography he solemnly assures us that he was present on the battlefields of Wagram, Aspern, and Eylau. There is not a word of truth in the statement! His diary informs us that at the time when these events were taking place he was sitting comfortably at home in Paris. He occasionally speaks of long and important conversations with Napoleon, only in the next volume to declare: "Napoleon was not wont to talk to fools of my genus."

Every utterance of Stendhal's must, therefore, be accepted with reserve; especially must we beware of his letters, for in these, presumably from fear of the police, he made use of varying aliases and was accustomed to falsify the date. He would send a letter from Rome, dating it from Orvieto; or, he would be spending the day in Grenoble, and pretend he was writing from Besançon. Often the year is given wrongly; nearly always the day of the month is incorrect; well-nigh invariably is the signature an assumed name. Diligent biographers have collected over two hundred such flights of fancy. Stendhal, whose authentic name was Beyle, signed his letters with such imaginary appellations as, Cottinet, Dominique, Don Flegme, Gaillard, A. L. Feburier, Baron Dormant, A. L. Champagne; or he would make use of the names of other writers, such as Lamartine and Jules Janin. His hoaxes were in reality the outcome of an innate delight in bewildering, in dumbfounding people, in disguising himself, in hiding himself. Stendhal assumes these kaleidoscopic changes in order to arouse interest in himself and to make his true personality invisible; he flashes his

rapier in masterly fashion in order to keep the inquisitive at bay; and he never attempts to conceal his passion for deception. A friend, in the course of a letter, once reproached Stendhal for having lied most abominably on a certain occasion. "True," wrote our author in the margin, his spirit unruffled by the accusation. Gaily, and with ironical pleasure, he falsifies the number of his years of civil service, he professes loyalty for the Bourbons at one moment and for Napoleon at another. In all his writings, whether published or unpublished, misstatements abound like spawn in a fishpond. His final lie, the one with which he bowed his adieux to the world, is recorded in the cemetery at Montmartre. Here we read on his tombstone: "Arrigio Beyle, Milanese." Yet he was really, much to his annoyance, born in Grenoble, and received in baptism the name of Henri! He wished to wear his mask to the end, to cloak himself in romantic trappings even at the approach of death.

In spite of all, however, few men have launched upon the world so many vital truths concerning their own personalities as did this past master in the art of dissembling. Stendhal was capable of telling the truth with the same alacrity that he displayed in telling lies. He has given us such intimate revelations concerning himself, has spoken with such amazing frankness as to the details of his inner life, that we are left speechless at his lack of reserve. On other occasions, however, just when he is on the verge of confiding some matter of interest, he suddenly draws a veil or fobs us off with a jest. Of his own free will, and with a profusion of circumstantial evidence, he discloses things which ordinary mortals would not admit even under torture. Stendhal was, in fact, as sturdy, nay as impudent, a truthteller as he was a liar. In one case as in

the other he ignores the conventional moral canons, and thrusts his way ruthlessly through all the barriers of the inner censorship. A man of a naturally shy disposition, timid in the presence of women, entrenching himself behind his aliases, as soon as he takes pen in hand he is full of courage. Vanished then are all inhibitions. Wherever, in his inner self, he encounters resistances, he collars them, drags them to the light of day, and dissects them with the utmost precision. The things which in the material world have proved to be the most inhibitive are mastered by him in the realm of psychology with the most thoroughgoing success. Thus, already in the year 1820, he intuitively opened some of the most intricately barricaded avenues to the soul, thereby anticipating, by a hundred years, the complicated and highly elaborated apparatus of psychoanalysis. Yet he possessed no more elaborate instrument than personal observation, and depended on no cut-and-dried theories for his intrepid raids into the land of the unconscious. He relied upon the hard and well pointed bistoury of inquisitiveness to lay bare what he wanted to know; and the most signal quality of his work was a bold statement of the truth without any regard for what the world would say.

Stendhal scrutinizes what he feels; his feelings are then exhibited frankly and unashamedly; the more daring they are, the better; the more intimate they are, the more passionately does he set them forth. He takes especial delight in exploring his most questionable feelings, those which have, through very shame, crept away into the dark recesses of his soul. How often he returns to the hatred he felt for his father! How fantastical are his references to the subject! He mockingly informs us that for a whole month he endeavoured, unavailingly, to

get up a feeling of sorrow at the news of the old man's death. The most painful avowals concerning his sex life, his persistent lack of success with women, the crises he underwent on account of his unbridled vanity, are all set out with the accuracy of an ordnance map. He communicates certain intimate happenings with a wealth of detail that reminds us of a clinical history; no one before him has ever allowed such confessions to pass the lips, or if an author should have permitted them to slip into his book they are ascribed to a printer's error. Stendhal's supreme merit lies in this, that through the transparent and egoistical coldness of his crystalline intelligence he has been able to transmit to future generations some of the rarest and most precious adventures of the soul. These experiences, preserved as it were in an ice-chamber, will endure for all time, a treasure of inestimable worth. Had this strange master of deception never lived, mankind would have known far less of the universe of the feelings and of their underworld.

The inconsistency in Stendhal's make-up can now be explained. It was essential that he should be a master craftsman in the art of deception, in the technique of falsehood, if he was to be successful in the art of telling the truth. He once declared that nothing had helped so greatly in his psychological development as the fact of his growing up in a thoroughly boring family circle which necessitated a constant life of deception from childhood upwards. For it is only when one has had personal experience of the ease with which a lie drops from one's lips, of the way in which feelings change with lightning speed as they rise from the heart and attain verbal expression, only when one has become an adept in the arts of quibble and fence, that one knows "how many

precautions are needed if one is not to lie." This disciplined mind has shown, after innumerable experiments within the confines of its own psychic world, how swiftly every feeling, immediately it realizes it is being observed, becomes shamefaced and beats a hurried retreat, so that, like a fisherman angling for trout, the experimenter must strike quickly and land the creature without delay if he is to make good his catch. Truth must be clutched and prisoned as soon as ever she pokes her nose round the corner. To seize upon such self-observations, to dissect them ere they can scuttle off into the subconscious or (through protective colouration) become merged into the background, such is the hobby of this practised and passionate seeker after knowledge. He is wise enough to realize that the chase holds very rare moments when fortune smiles on the hunter, that they are as scarce and as precious as the quarry itself. Strange as it may seem, few have had so persistent a respect for truth as Stendhal, the arch-liar. He knew that truth did not flaunt her charms at every crossroad, ready and willing to allow herself to be caressed by all who cared, rough-handed, to touch her. He, cunning as Odysseus, knew that truths dwell in caves, dread the daylight, scurry away at the first sound of a footfall, and slip from between the fingers of one who thinks to have got a firm hold. One needs to tread warily, to creep up softly, to be light of touch, to be tender of hand and of eye, to be practised in the art of seeing in the dark; above all one needs passion, passion which has been mentally schooled, which can soar on the wings of the spirit, which is endowed with a mania for listening and for tracking; one needs, as Stendhal says, to summon up all one's courage, to penetrate into the

minutest recesses of the labyrinthine plexus of the nerves, to find a way into the tenebrous crypts of the soul. Only thus can we hope to catch a whispered avowal; only thus may we perceive one facet of the everlastingly unattainable "truth" which coarse-grained men have endeavoured to immure in the mausoleums of their philosophical systems and to prison in the stifling cages of their theories. Stendhal, the would-be sceptic, looks upon truth as a gem of great price; he, in his wisdom, knows how elusive she is, how rare are her visits; above all, he realizes that she will not allow herself to be penned up like a domestic animal, to be sold and worn out like a beast of burden; he is well aware that knowledge comes only to those whose perceptions are fine.

Indeed, Stendhal deemed truth so precious that he never offered his truths for sale, never cried his wares. All he wanted was to be upright towards himself, and in his own despite. Hence his unscrupulous lying! This arch-egoist, this passionate investigator of his own motives and actions, never felt the slightest need to teach his contemporaries, and least of all to tell them about himself. On the contrary, he hedged his person about with a thorny thicket of spitefulness and malicious wit so that the crassly inquisitive might not come near, and he might be left in peace to pursue his way along the strangely deep galleries burrowing into his own depths. The greatest joke of his life was to mislead his neighbour; his most persistent passion was the passion to be honest with himself. Lies are short of leg and get left behind, so that they do not outcrawl the framework of their own generation; but the truths a man utters, once they are avowed and acknowledged, live on when he who launched them on the world

has long been dead. A man who has dealt uprightly with himself, were it but once in his lifetime, has been upright for ever. He who has disclosed the secrets of his soul has confessed them to the whole of mankind.

LIKENESS

Tu es laid, mais . . . tu as de la physiognomie.

UNCLE GAGNON TO YOUNG HENRI BEYLE

THE attic in the Rue Richelieu is lighted by two wax candles, flickering in their holders on the writing-table. Stendhal has been at work on his novel since noon. Now he throws down his pen. Enough for to-day! A wash, a saunter, a good meal, pleasant company, women—by these he will be refreshed!

He makes his preparations, thrusts his arms into his coat, pushes back his wig. Now for a final glance in the mirror! He contemplates his own image, and promptly pulls a face which brings a sardonic fold to the corner of his mouth. No, he thinks, yours is not a handsome face! Such an unrefined, bulldog countenance, chubby, rubicund, fat and well-liking. Ah, how repulsively thick and nubbly his nose is as it lies amidships in this provincial face! The eyes? Not so bad; small, black, sparkling, filled with the restless light of curiosity. But they are too deep-set and are too small, compared with the heavy brows and the square-cut visage. Had he not been nicknamed "le Chinois" when he was serving his time in the army? Is there any redeeming feature? Stendhal angrily pursues his investigations. Not one! There is not a glimpse of tenderness, of spiritual vitality; every trait is heavy and commonplace, is massive and broad; a countenance

set in a framework of brown hair—and yet maybe this face is better than the body it surmounts. For the body is stunted, the neck thick and short—he would rather not look at it further. He hates his rotund belly, and the abbreviated legs that must carry the heavy mass of Henri Beyle's corpulence. He has never forgotten that his schoolfellows used to call him "the moving tower." Stendhal would fain seek some consolation as he gazes at himself in the unflattering glass. Ah, his hands! There, at least, is something he can be pleased with. Delicate as a woman's, the nails cut to a point and polished, they certainly betray a little intelligence and gentle birth. His skin, too, is of fine texture, smooth and lustrous as a girl's; surely it tells of noble susceptibilities? But who ever deigns to notice such details in a man? Women look to a man's face and figure—and, as far as he is concerned, he has known for fifty years now that his face and figure are hopelessly plebeian. Augustin Filon described his head as "une grosse tête de tapissier"; Monselet characterized him as "un diplomat avec un visage de droguiste." He feels that even such comparisons are too lenient, too friendly, and himself gives a verdict that is less flattering: "the face of an Italian butcher."

It would not be so bad, he muses, if this obese and massive body housed a virile and ruthless spirit. There are women who have no confidence in any but broad-shouldered men, who would rather trust themselves to a Cossack than to a dandy. Yet he knows that his rough and boorish exterior is only a decoy, a false bait. In this vast and fleshly tabernacle there is housed a being well-nigh morbid in its sensitiveness. Medical men have described Stendhal as "un monstre de sensibilité." How can so Ariel a spirit be caged within a Caliban's fleshly per-

sonality? Some wicked fairy must surely have played hanky-panky with his soul when he was lying in his cradle. The changeling spirit can never accommodate itself to its unseemly abode; it shudders and trembles at every provocation. An open window in the neighbouring room brings a shiver to the delicate skin; a door shut with a bang causes the nerves to start and quiver; an evil smell entails nausea and giddiness; a woman draws near, and immediately he is flurried, anxious, faint-hearted, or else (for these things sometimes act by contraries) he becomes unmannerly. What an incomprehensible mixture, forsooth! Why should he be afflicted with such mountains of flesh and fat and paunch, why should he be so broad and big-boned, when he was endowed with a spirit as fine as gossamer? Why must he be equipped with so dull, uninteresting, and coarse a tenement for his exquisitely responsive, intricate, and ethereal soul?

He turns away from the looking-glass. There is nothing to be done with such an exterior; Stendhal has been well aware of this ever since his youth. A veritable magician among tailors is helpless before such a figure. Press the flabby paunch up as much as you may, clothe the ridiculously abbreviated legs in the finest of Lyons silks, disguise the prematurely grey whiskers with a manly looking brown dye, set an elegant wig aloft to hide the bald and shiny pate, polish the nails and pare them to heart's content—nothing can help! Such things serve merely to furbish him up for awhile, but no woman will trouble to turn her head at his passage or go into ecstasies over his appearance as Madame de Rénal does over her Julien or Madame de Chasteller over her Lucien Leuwen. Women take no notice of him. Even when he was a young man, a lieutenant, they ignored him; how can he expect

them to act differently now, when his soul has got stuck in a veritable bog of fat, and when age is graving wrinkles on his forehead? Good luck with the fair sex is impossible to the possessor of such a phiz. Yet what other happiness is there in this world?

One thing remains: to be nimble-witted, clever, interesting; to attract others by the play of intelligence; to divert attention from the body and the face by directing the observer's thoughts towards the inner man; to dazzle and seduce by surprise attacks and by eloquence. "Les talents peuvent consoler de l'absence de la beauté." If one has the misfortune to possess such a physique one must catch women by the display of mental faculties, must stimulate their curiosity, seeing that there is nothing to arouse their æsthetic sense. Thus one must play on the melancholy string with a sentimental woman, on the cynical string with a frivolous woman, and sometimes one has to strike up a completely different tune; one must for ever be on guard, for ever be witty and amusing. "Amusez une femme et vous l'aurez." Cunningly seize upon every weakness, make use of the least hint at boredom; pretend to be ardent when you are in reality cool and collected, or humbug your mistress with an assumption of unconcern when you are glowing with passion; bewilder her with abrupt changes of mood, and trick her into perplexity; always lead her to think that you are different from other men. Above all, never miss your opportunities, never be deterred by fancying you are making a mess of things. Women may forget a man's face! Did not Titania herself one moonlit night bestow her kisses on an ass?

Stendhal puts his hat on jauntily, takes his yellow gloves in hand, and glances once more in the mirror to

see if he has achieved the cold and mocking smile he wishes to affect. Yes, that is the expression he would like to take with him when he pays Madame de T. his respects this evening; an expression at once ironical, cynical, frivolous, and icy. It is always worth while trying to interest and astound a company with some sally or other which will shield his unhappy face from notice. Immediately upon entering the room he must bluff the guests, must conceal his inner trepidation by keeping up a continuous stream of braggadocio. As he goes downstairs he thinks out some apt phrase wherewith to make his entry. He will have himself announced as Monsieur le Marchand César Bombet; then he himself will appear as a talkative, bombastic woolstapler, never allowing anyone else to get in a word edgewise, talking of his business at such length, so brilliantly, with such impish insolence, that he will have the whole gathering in a ripple of laughter, and the ladies will have grown accustomed to his uncouth appearance. Follow this up with a running fire of anecdote, both broad and merry, calculated to titillate their senses; seek out a retired corner sufficiently dark to veil his physical deficiencies, quaff a couple of glasses of punch—then perhaps, perhaps, towards midnight, the ladies may declare him to be "quite charming!"

FILM OF HIS LIFE

Je serai célèbre vers 1880.

1799. The diligence from Grenoble to Paris halts at Nemours to change horses. Excited groups of people; placards on the walls; newspapers. Yesterday young General Bonaparte dealt the Republic the finishing stroke, kicked the Directory out of office, and proclaimed himself Consul. The travellers are agog, they enter into lively discussions; the only one who shows no interest is a sixteen-year-old youth, broadshouldered, rosy-cheeked. What cares he for Republic or Consulate? He is on his way to Paris, ostensibly to become a student at the Polytechnic, but in reality in order to be quit of his life in a provincial town. To live in Paris! Paris! Paris! The very sound of the name lets loose a flood of dream images. Paris means luxury, elegance, cheerfulness; in Paris one can soar as it were on wings, be high-spirited, antiprovincial, free; above all, Paris spells women, many women. Some woman, young, beautiful, tender, elegant, resembling Victorine Cably, the actress he had loved from afar in Grenoble, may come his way. He will get to know her in romantic circumstances, he will rescue her from a carriage accident by stopping the runaway horses. He will perform some great, heroic deed for her sake, and she will become his sweetheart.

The diligence lumbers on its way, unmercifully grinding these premature dreams under its wheels. The lad

has hardly a look to spare for the landscape, hardly a word to exchange with his travelling companions. This theoretical Don Juan has his mind full of fantastic adventures, romantic deeds, women, Paris. At length they pass the barrier, and the wheels thunder over cobbled streets, the coach threads its way along narrow, dirty alleys overshadowed by houses, reeking of stale food and rank with poverty. Horror seizes the stripling as he contemplates the city of his dreams. So this is Paris; "ce n'est donc que cela?" Henceforward the phrase will often drop from his lips: after his first duel; when the army crosses the Saint Bernard; the night of his first love experience. Reality will for ever disappoint this inveterate weaver of romance.

He is deposited in front of a dispassionate house in the rue Saint Dominique. Here, in an attic five flights up, in a small, dark room as exiguous as a prison cell, lighted by a tiny dormer window—indeed a forcing-house for melancholy—young Henri Beyle passes the first weeks. He does not open one of his books on mathematics the whole of that time. For hours on end, he roams the streets looking at women. What a source of temptation they are to be sure in their neo-Roman dresses, half naked; how alluringly they make merry with their beaux; how exquisite their laughter, so airy, so enticing! He dares not accost any of them. How should a clumsy, stupid youth, dressed in a green coat of provincial cut, with no pretensions to elegance, make advances to these charming creatures? He does not even venture to approach the gay girls who loaf round the street lamps ready to sell themselves to the first bidder; his heart aches with a sullen envy of other young scamps more audacious than he. He has never a friend to turn to; no society to amuse him;

no occupation. His humour is morose as he wanders about the grimy streets, dreaming of romantic adventures, so lost in his own thoughts that he is in constant risk of being run over.

At last, his spirit brought to heel by an intolerable yearning for the warmth, the intimacy, the conversation of fellow mortals, he goes to see his wealthy relatives, the Darus. They give him a hearty welcome, invite him to their beautiful house, make him feel at home. Alas, Henri Beyle cannot appreciate their kindness to the full, for do they not hail from the provinces? This, in his eyes, is "original sin"! They live in comfortable circumstances, while his own purse is empty; that is galling to him in the extreme. Listless, mumchance, gawky, he sits at table with these kindly folk, their secret enemy, hiding his poignant desire for tenderness behind a mask, sulky, ironical, mulish. Old Daru must look upon his youthful relative as an unpleasant and ungrateful guest. Later in the evening the family hero comes home from work, weary and taciturn. This is Pierre Daru. He is employed at the War Office, is becoming Bonaparte's right hand man, the only confidant of the mighty general's scheme of conquest. By temperament one would have thought the soldier would have had much in common with the budding author; yet, because the lad shut himself away behind a wall of silence, Pierre Daru looked upon Henri Beyle as a dullard. Was not young Daru making a translation of Horace into French verse, writing philosophical essays? Was he not destined, when his fighting days were over and he had laid aside his uniform, to add an *Histoire de Venise* to his credit? At the moment, however, he is immersed in the duties of his office, overshadowed by Bonaparte. All day long and far into the night, he la-

bours at Napoleon's side, writing letters at his master's dictation, drawing up plans, making calculations. Henri hates Pierre because the latter seeks to advance him in his career. This is precisely what Beyle does not want; he wishes to keep himself to himself.

One day Pierre Daru announces that he has secured a post for Beyle; the boy is to present himself at the War Office without delay. Now, under the lash of Daru's tongue, Henri Beyle plies his pen from ten o'clock in the forenoon to one o'clock at night, writing, writing, writing, letters, reports, dispatches, until his fingers seem palsied with fatigue. What can all this scribbling be for, he wonders. Soon, the whole world will know! Unwittingly he has his share in the preparations for the Italian campaign which begins with the battle of Marengo and is to end with the creation of the Napoleonic empire. At length the "Moniteur" lets the secret out of the bag; war is declared. Henri Beyle heaves a sigh of relief. Daru, his tormentor, will have to go to army headquarters. Over and done with, this endless and purposeless writing! War is far better than to have to tolerate the two things he most dreads in life: work and boredom.

MAY, 1800. Rearguard of the Army of Italy. Lausanne.

Two cavalry officers rein in their mounts and laugh so heartily that the plumes on their shakos are set aquivering. An absurd comedy is taking place before their eyes. Perched on the back of a restive mare, clinging to his seat as best he may, is a short-legged, chubby youth, dressed in a semi-civilian and semi-military costume. His bulging valise is strapped on to the saddle in front of him. He is hard put to it not to be thrown. His huge sabre, dangling askew from his middle, bangs against the

beast's flank as she curvets and prances about the road. At length, beside herself with irritation, she rears, and pitches her rider over hedge and ditch into the field beyond.

Royal entertainment, indeed! Then compassion takes hold of one of the onlookers. "Go and help the poor fellow," exclaims Captain Burelviller, sending his orderly to the rescue. The man gallops away, flogs the mare into submission, slips the reins over his arm, stoops to give the awkward rider a leg-up, and returns with his trophies to his master's side. Crimson with rage and mortification, the unhappy lad asks what the captain wants with him. Young Beyle, for it is he, the incurable romanticist, already has visions of arrest or of a duel. No sooner, however, does the captain learn that his interlocutor is a cousin of the mighty Daru, than his manner changes, he ceases guffawing over the joke and becomes serious and polite, begging Henri Beyle to give him the pleasure of his company for the remainder of the ride, and asking the recruit where he has been all this time. Henri flushes up again. How can he tell such a vulgarian that, with tears in his eyes, he has stood for hours before the house in Geneva where Jean-Jacques Rousseau was born? So he assumes a dashing, merry air, swaggers in so comical a manner, that he wins the hearts of his companions. The latter, thereupon, give him an elementary lesson in horsemanship, show him how to hold the reins, how to buckle on his sword at the correct angle; they let him in to the secrets of the profession. Instantly Henri Beyle recovers from his discomfiture; he feels he is a real soldier, a hero.

He feels he is a hero—or, let us say, he will not allow others to cast a doubt upon his courage. He would rather have his tongue cut out than betray himself by a

sigh of anxiety or by an untactful word. As the army defiles over the Saint Bernard pass, he turns to his friend the captain and asks disparagingly: "Is this all?" The question, savouring as it does of disappointment, is becoming habitual to him. At Fort Bard, he again plays the astonished. Here, the cannons are thundering: "Is this war? No more than this?" Still, he has smelt powder; he has, as it were, lost one kind of virginity. He spurs his steed forward towards Italy, where he is to lose the other kind, his eagerness for the eternal adventure of Eros stimulated by his nodding acquaintanceship with Mars.

MILAN, 1801. Corso at the Porta Orientale.

The war has delivered the women of Piedmont from captivity! Now they do not hesitate to drive unveiled and show their pretty faces to the French deliverers who throng the gay streets beneath the sunny skies. They pull up, in order to chat with their admirers or their cicisbei, smile at the saucy young officers with evident appreciation, and play a meaning game with fans and with flowers.

Pressing back into the shadows, a callow sub-lieutenant is devouring these fine ladies with ardent eyes. Yes, Henri Beyle has suddenly been promoted to the position of subaltern in the sixth dragoon regiment, although he has not yet been in a single battle. When one has a cousin like Pierre Daru one can arrive anywhere! His clanking sword, his big thigh-boots with their shining spurs, his smart uniform, have changed the short, thickset yokel of yesterday into a very martial figure indeed.

Instead of loafing about on the Corso, instead of strutting up and down dragging his sabre along the pavement and making sheep's-eyes at the women, he should be with his company which is engaged in pushing back the Aus-

trians behind the Mincio. But our worthy dragoon began young to detest doing the obvious; it had not taken him long to discover that "very little intelligence is needed to learn how to slash with a sabre." What's the use of being cousin to the mighty Daru if one cannot escape from military duties and enjoy the delights of Milan? In bivouac there are no lovely ladies; above all, this is no Scala, no godlike Scala with its operas by Cimarosa and its sublime singers. It is the Scala that Henri Beyle has chosen for his headquarters, not a tent somewhere in an Italian bog nor the Casa Bovara where the general staff carries on its business. Every evening he is the first arrival in the seats of the fifth-tier gallery. As the lights go up, he watches the ladies, "più che seminuda," come in; they are dressed in the most airy of silks, and uniformed men bend above their bare shoulders. How beautiful these Italian women are, to be sure! How merry, how attractive! And how grateful they are to Bonaparte for having brought so many fine young men to Italy—much to the disgust of the Milanese husbands!

As ill luck would have it none of these beauties had as yet thought of singling out Henri Beyle of Grenoble as a sweetheart. How was Angela Pietragrua, the plump daughter of a cloth merchant, who was not loath to show off her charms before company and gave her lips freely to the mustachioed officers to enjoy—how was she to know that "il cinese," as she mockingly called young Beyle, was in love with her? How was she to guess that he dreamed of her day and night as an unattainable idol, and that he was to make her memory imperishable by his romantic attachment?

True, he comes every evening to play faro with his brother officers; but he sits mumchance in a corner, and

turns pale when she speaks to him. Has he ever squeezed her hand, or pressed his knee against hers, or written her a note, or whispered "mi piace"? Buxom Angela is used to unambiguous advances on the part of French officers of dragoons, and she hardly gives a thought to the stumpy little subaltern in his corner. Thus he misses his chance of winning her favours, and never realizes how willingly and generously she bestows her favours on all and sundry. Despite his imposing sword and his big boots, Henri Beyle is as shy as ever he was in Paris, and this timid Don Juan is still a "virgin." Each day he determines, as night draws near, to undertake the necessary assault; he makes entries in his notebook, recording what older men have told him as to how to overcome a woman's virtuous resistance. But no sooner is our would-be Casanova in the presence of his beloved, his divinity, his Angela, than he becomes alarmed and perplexed, and blushes like a girl. At last he resolves to be a fully adult man; he makes up his mind to sacrifice his virginity. A Milanese professional offers herself as an altar for his sacrifice. "I have quite forgotten who she was or what she looked like," he writes in after years. Unfortunately she bestows on him the malady which the Constable of Bourbon had brought with him to Italy nearly three centuries before, and which ever since had passed by the name of the French evil. Thus the servitor of Mars, having ventured into the service of the sweet goddess of love, has for many years to submit to the thraldom of Mercury.

PARIS, 1803. Again the scene is laid in a fifth-story attic. Again our hero is wearing civilian dress. Laid aside are the sabre, the spurs, the top-boots, the uniform; his

lieutenant's commission has been chucked into a corner of the room. He is sick to death of the soldier game: "J'en suis saoûl!" The idiots had merely to propose that he should carry out his duties as a garrison officer "seriously," should groom his horse, and display a certain amount of discipline; that was enough to make Henri Beyle take to his heels. Obedience, forsooth! This headstrong creature holds nothing so holy as "to order no other human being about and never to submit to the commands of others." He therefore sends a note to the minister, handing in his resignation. At the same time he writes to his father, a straitlaced monitor, begging him to forward some money. Much to his surprise, this father of his (whom he systematically calumniates in his writings) actually sends a monthly remittance. Not much, it is true; but enough to warrant the ordering of a decent suit of clothes, to buy imposing neckcloths, and fine white paper on which to write his plays. For Henri Beyle has made a fresh resolution: he will no longer be a mathematician; he wants to be a playwright.

The first attempts to initiate himself into this new profession take the form of frequent visits to the Comédie Française, where he studies the art at the feet of Corneille and Molière. Another discovery. If he is to be an efficient dramatist he must get to know women, must love and be loved, must find "une belle âme," "une âme aimante." He pays court to little Adèle Rebouffet, and enjoys the role of rejected lover to the full. Luckily for him, the young lady's mother, a lady of riper charms, consoles him two or three times a week in a practical manner for the waywardness of his inamorata. The experience is amusing and instructive; but it is not yet the real thing, the great love-affair he has dreamed of. Un-

deterred he sets out in search of his idol. At last he is fettered to the chariot of Louason, an actress at the Comédie Française, who tolerates his passionate adoration —at a distance. Henri is never more earnestly in love than when a woman denies herself to him, since he cares only for the unattainable. Soon our twenty-year-old lover is aflame with desire.

MARSEILLES, 1803. Sudden transformation, incredible almost.

Can this in truth be Henri Beyle, sometime lieutenant in Napoleon's army, Parisian dandy, a writer but yesterday? Is this really he, this clerk in a black apron, working in the basement of Meunier & Co., provision merchants, wholesale and retail? There he sits, perched on a high stool, adding up figures in a dirty and narrow street to the left of the harbour. The office is filled with the stench of oil and figs. Did he not, so recently as yesterday, indite verses expressing the sublimest aspirations? And here he is to-day handling raisins and coffee, sugar and flour, sending in claims to the firm's clients, trafficking with customs house officials. Yes, this is he, bullet-headed, hard-headed, as ever. Tristan dressed himself as a beggar in order to reach his beloved Isolde; many a princess has donned a page's suit and followed her knight to the wars. Henri Beyle has acted no less heroically. He has become a grocer's assistant in order to be near his Louason, who has been engaged at a theatre in Marseilles. What matter if all day he is dipping his fingers into sugar and flour, when at night he can meet an actress at the stage door, and can share her bed! Can he not watch her slim young body sporting in the waves and know that, for

the first time in his life, he is the proud possessor of all this beauty?

What a glorious time of fulfilment! Unfortunately there is nothing so dangerous for a person of romantic disposition as to become intimate with the ideal. One discovers that Marseilles, the queen of the Mediterranean, is just as much a provincial town as Grenoble, and that its streets are as foul and stinking as any in Paris. Also when one comes to live with one's goddess one is disappointed to find that her intelligence is not on a par with her looks—that she is, in fact, thoroughly stupid. Boredom sets in. At last a day dawns when the diva's engagement comes to an end. She speeds away to Paris, and he heaves a sigh of relief. Healed of one illusion, he is ready to set forth on the quest of another!

BRUNSWICK, 1806. Once more we have a change of costume.

A uniform, it is true; but no longer the rough-and-ready garb of a subaltern which appeals merely to canteen girls, or to milliners' apprentices. Now hats are doffed respectfully by the Germans of rank and calling at the approach of Monsieur Henri Beyle, commissariat officer to the Grand Army, as he strolls along the street accompanied by Herr Von Strombeck or some other bigwig of Brunswick society. Yet it is no longer plain Henri Beyle we see. Since he has come to Germany, he has made an addition to his name, has made it worthy of his present position. He signs himself: Henri "de" Beyle. Napoleon has not granted our fainéant this title of nobility, has not even decorated his buttonhole with the ribbon of the Legion of Honour. Why should such distinctions be granted to a young man whose only business it is to secure

cushy jobs through the influence of Cousin Daru? But Henri Beyle, who is a keen observer, notices that the worthy Germans are attracted to a title as flies to a honey-pot. And surely if one frequents patrician gatherings where there are so many pretty and desirable young ladies to invite to the dance, one cannot be blamed if one refuses to appear as a commoner. Two little letters out of the whole alphabet are all that is needed in addition to a handsome uniform to create a suitable atmosphere around his person. Monsieur l'Intendant's task is a delicate one. He has been commissioned to raise a levy of five million francs, and, indeed, succeeds in extracting seven from the already plundered land of Brunswick. He is responsible for keeping order, for organizing supplies. He quits himself of his charge with commendable speed, and spends his leisure playing billiards, or going out shooting, or dallying with gentler prey. Even Germany can boast of appetizing morsels of femininity! His more refined cravings can be satisfied in the company of fair-haired Minchen, a girl of noble birth; while his coarser lusts find vent in the arms of a friend's inamorata who rejoices in the delectable name of Knabelhuber and with whom he passes the night. We see Henri is once more in clover. He feels no envy for the lot of the many marshals and generals who sip their soup in the blazing sun of Austerlitz and Jena. He sits in the shadow of war, and is well content to read his book, translate German poetry, and write exquisite letters to his sister Pauline. He is acquiring knowledge and experience, is developing into a connoisseur of life, is a straggler in the wake of every battle, an intellectual dilettante of every art; day by day he throws off further bonds, gaining freedom; and the wider his acquaintance with the world, the better he ob-

serves its phenomena, the more intricate is his cognition of himself.

VIENNA. May 31, 1809. In the Schottenkirche, which is dark, and almost empty. Early morning.

A few old men and women, dressed in threadbare mourning, are occupying the front pew. These are the relatives of dear old Papa Haydn. The French incendiary bombs falling on his beloved Vienna had been too much for the frail old man, they had literally frightened him to death. The composer of the Austrian national anthem died, a patriot to the end, whispering the words: "God save Emperor Francis." Then, with all speed, amid the tumult caused by the entry of the conquering army, they had hurried the corpse, unsubstantial as a child's, from the tiny suburban house in Gumpendorf, to the cemetery. Now the music lovers of Vienna are assembled for the solemn requiem mass in honour of their master. A respectable number of persons have ventured forth to pay their tribute to his memory, in spite of the fact that enemy soldiers are billeted in most of the houses. Maybe that among the congregation we could find a short-legged, peculiar looking man, Herr van Beethoven by name, a man with a massive, leonine head; perhaps among the boys singing in the organ-loft there is a twelve-year-old youngster who goes by the name of Franz Schubert. Suddenly, an officer of high rank in the French army, in full-dress uniform, enters the building, accompanied by a gentleman wearing academician's robes. The congregation is alarmed and horrified. Do the invaders mean to forbid them honouring old Papa Haydn, the best and gentlest of mortals? Nothing of the sort! Henri de Beyle, Auditeur de la Grande Armée, has come here in a private

capacity, having heard that Mozart's *Requiem* was to be sung. For a chance of hearing Mozart's or Cimarosa's works performed, this quaint warrior would ride a hundred miles and more. He deems forty bars of his beloved masters' music far more valuable than the most glorious of battlefields with its forty thousand dead. Noiselessly he slips into a pew and listens to the slow strains of the music. Strange to say, the *Requiem* does not appeal to him, he finds it too full of movement; this is not "his" Mozart, so light of wing, so buoyant. It is ever thus with him. When art overstrides the limits of what is simple and melodious to soar aloft into regions beyond the human, peopled with the wilder and more unbridled spirits of the everlasting elements, he feels out of his depth, estranged. He feels the same when, for the first time, he hears *Don Giovanni* performed at the Kärntnertor Theatre. And when the man in the neighbouring box, Herr van Beethoven (whose very name as yet means nothing to Beyle), in days to come launches his tempestuous music upon him, Stendhal will be no less alarmed at this divine chaos than is his great colleague in Weimar, Herr von Goethe himself.

The mass is said. Henri Beyle issues from the church, radiant with high spirits, resplendent in his uniform, and strolls along Graben. He is delighted with the beautiful town of Vienna, finds it enchanting; he loves its people, who make such good music, and are not so harsh and "thorough" as the Germans of the north. At the moment he should be at his office attending to the commissariat of the Grand Army. That, however, seems to him of quite secondary importance. Cousin Daru is slaving away like a nigger, and Napoleon is bound to come out victorious, anyway. Thank goodness, there are plenty of queer folk

in the world, to whom work is a pleasure. One can live at their expense! Thus does it come about that Henri Beyle, from childhood an adept in the devilish art of ingratitude, undertakes the easier and self-imposed task of consoling Madame Daru during her stay in Vienna, making up to her for her husband's devotion to duty. Can one take a better revenge upon a benefactor than by being agreeable to his wife? Madame Daru and Henri Beyle ride together in the Prater, they visit art galleries, and the charming residences of the Austrian nobility; they drive away to Hungary in a well-sprung carriage, what time the soldiers are dying on the field of Wagram and the worthy Daru is working in a sea of ink. Their afternoons are devoted to love, their evenings to music, preferably to Mozart at the Kärntnertor Theatre. Slowly, very slowly, the strange creature beneath the official's cloak comes to realize that for him all that is sweet and worth while in life belongs to the realm of art.

1810–1812. PARIS. The Empire at the climax of its glory.

Life is ever more enjoyable. Plenty of money and no official duties; our hero has become (God knows through no merits of his own, but through the good offices of women friends) a member of the council of State and inspector of the crown buildings. But Napoleon does not make serious demands upon his councillors; they have plenty of time to take their walks abroad, or, rather, to drive about to their heart's content. For Henri Beyle, his purse well lined with these official moneys, has his own cabriolet, new, fresh, and shining with varnish. He dines at the Café de Foy, employs the best tailor in Paris to attend to his wardrobe, has a love intimacy with his cousin which he supplements (thus attaining to the ideal of his

youth) by an amourette with a dancer named Bereyter. Is it not amazing that one should have more success in the domain of love at thirty than at twenty? How incomprehensible women are, to be sure! The cooler one is, the more passionate do they become. Slowly, Paris, which had seemed so hateful in the callow student's eyes, begins to please him. Truly, life is a splendid affair. And, as chief of blessings, one has money and time, so much time forsooth that Beyle, of his own accord and in order to recall his beloved Italy to his mind, actually undertakes a piece of work. He writes his *Histoire de la peinture en Italie*. Ah, well, the writing of books on art is a pleasurable undertaking, and does not commit a man to anything. Especially delightful is it when, as is Henri Beyle's little way, one can copy most of the matter out of other people's books, filling in the crevices with anecdote and quip. What a joy to approach the great spirits among men, even if one can do so only in the role of an epicurean! Some day, perhaps (thinks Stendhal), when old age has come, I shall write books reminding me of days gone by and of the women I have known. But why should I bother to do so now? Life is too rich, too full, too lovely, to waste a minute of it at a writing-table.

1812–1813. On the move again! Napoleon is once more waging war; this time the field of operations is some thousand miles away from Paris. Russia, the far-off land of adventure, lures our insatiably inquisitive "tourist." This is certainly not an opportunity to be missed. He may visit the Kremlin and gaze at the Muscovites with his own eyes, travel eastward at the State expense—comfortably, of course, and running no personal risks; he will keep in the rearguard, just as he had done in Italy, Germany,

and Austria. In actual fact, Marie Louise entrusts him with a thick portfolio containing letters to her husband; he is instructed to reach Moscow as quickly as possible. Experience has taught Beyle the tedium of war when seen at close quarters. He, therefore, provides for his own amusement by taking with him the twelve manuscript volumes of his *Histoire de la peinture*, bound in green morocco leather, and the play which he had begun to write many years before. Where, indeed, can a man devote himself better to his own interests than at army headquarters? Later on, the great Talma will be summoned to Moscow, and the grand opera company; not much time in that case for suffering from boredom. Besides, there will be variations on the theme of love: Polish women, and Russian.

On the journey, Beyle only stops at the towns which can provide him with an evening's entertainment in the shape of a play or music. Even in war time, even when travelling, he must have art as a companion. But what a drama awaits him in Russia. Moscow in flames, a metropolis of the world disappearing in smoke; such a spectacle has not been witnessed by a poet since Nero's day. Henri Beyle does not stay to indite an ode in honour of the tragic spectacle, and his letters are strangely silent concerning so unpleasant an experience. The subtle epicurean has long felt that all this military prancing about the world is far less important than a dozen bars of music or a clever book; an emotional tremor of the heart means more to him than all the guns of Borodino; and his historical sense is still limited to the history of his own life. He, therefore, rescues a beautiful edition of Voltaire from the conflagration, meaning to take it home as

a "souvenir de Moscou." But this time, Mars and his icy allies frustrate the schemes of our prince of shirkers. Monsieur l'Auditeur Beyle, arrived at the Beresina, hardly has time to shave himself with his wonted care (and he is the only officer in the Grand Army to trouble to do such a thing under the peculiar circumstances of the retreat!) before he is obliged to scurry across the bridge if he is not to be submerged with its ruins. His diary, his *Histoire de la peinture*, his beautiful edition of Voltaire, his horse, his fine new furs, his valise—all are left behind for the Cossacks to enjoy. With torn clothes, dirty, hunted, bedraggled, his hands and face chapped by exposure to the frosty air, he makes good his escape to Prussia. A gasp of relief—and forthwith he goes to the opera. Just as for many a hot bath would have been the first thought, so does Henri Beyle turn to music for refreshment. Thus for him the Russian campaign and the destruction of the Grand Army is no more than an interlude between pleasant evenings spent at the opera: *Matrimonio segreto* in Dresden on the outward journey; *Clemenzia di Tito* in Königsberg on the homeward route.

1814–1821. MILAN. Henri Beyle has again become a civilian. He has had more than enough of wars. At close quarters, one battle looks much the same as another; the same thing is to be witnessed at all of them, i. e. Nothing! Enough of official duties and fatherlands and slaughter, of useless papers and officers. If Napoleon, with his "courromanie," his mania for warmongering, should once more endeavour to become supreme in France, well and good, he'd have to do so without the help of Monsieur l'Auditeur Beyle, who is sick of obeying orders, who de-

sires nothing but the most natural—and yet the most difficult—thing in the world: at last, at long last, to manage his own life as he himself thinks fit.

Three years earlier, in the interval between two campaigns, Beyle had rushed away to Italy, as happy and carefree as a child, taking two thousand francs of his own to play about with. Already at that time he had experienced a feeling which was henceforward never to leave him, a yearning ache for the days of his youth; and youth for him spelt Italy. Italy, and Angela Pietragrua whom he had loved so diffidently in his humble sub-lieutenant days, and to whom his thoughts speed as he drives over the passes he crossed with the rearguard of the Army of Italy so long ago! He arrives in Milan towards nightfall. Quickly he washes the dust from face and hands, puts on fresh clothes, and away he flies to his heart's haven, the Scala Theatre, there to refresh himself in music. Truly, as he says, "Music awakens love."

Next day he speeds to her house; she appears, beautiful as of yore, greets him politely but as though he were a stranger. He introduces himself. "Henri Beyle." The name means nothing to her. He recalls to her memory the names of certain of his comrades, Joinville and the rest. At length his beloved's face is irradiated with a smile, as she exclaims: "Ah, ah, Ella è il cinese!" (Ah, you are the Chinaman!)—that hateful nickname is all that Angela Pietragrua can remember about her romantic lover. But Henri Beyle is no longer a youth of seventeen. He boldly makes avowal of his love, tells her of his passion of earlier days. She looks at him in astonishment: "Why on earth did you not tell me about this at the time?" Gladly would she have granted what he wanted, a little favour any kindhearted woman would be pleased

to give. Happily they can make up now for lost opportunities! Soon the incurable romanticist, eleven years behind the times it is true, is able to record on his braces the date of this memorable conquest: "21 Septembre 1811, 11 heures ½ du matin."

Then he had been recalled to Paris. Once again, for the last time, in 1814, he is sent off to administer provinces in the name of the war-crazy Corsican, has "to defend his country." Fortunately—yes, fortunately, for Henri Beyle was no patriot and was inordinately pleased when the wars came to an end, even though the end meant a defeat for France—the three emperors made their entry into Paris. Now he can go to Italy, settle there for life, free from official positions, having shaken the dust of "la patrie" off his feet for ever. Splendid years, consecrated exclusively to music and to women, to conversations, to writing, and to art. Years of love: of sweethearts who played him false, like the all-too-yielding Angela; or such as through modesty rejected his advances, like the beautiful Mathilde. Years during which he came to know himself better and better; during which, night after night, he bathed his soul in music at the Scala; during which he conversed with the choicest spirits of the epoch, Lord Byron for instance; during which he examined the art treasures of Italy from Naples to Ravenna. Owing allegiance to none, his own master! Incomparable years of freedom! Evviva la libertà!!!

1821. Paris. Evviva la libertà? Better be discreet as to the use of the word "liberty" within the Italian frontiers these days. The Austrian masters and authorities are apt to look sourly at those who utter it. Nor is it wise to write books, even if they are the most blatant plagiarisms

like the *Lettres sur Haydn* or are three parts copied out of the works of other authors, like *L'histoire de la peinture en Italie* and *Rome, Naples, et Florence.* All unawares one sprinkles the pages copiously with the salt and pepper of witty sallies which unduly tickle the noses of the men in power. Before one knows where one is, the Austrian censor, Herr Wabruschek (was ever name more sapiently chosen!) will pounce upon some of these passages and report them to the minister for police, Herr Sedlnitzky, in Vienna. Thus a man of independent spirit may easily come to be looked upon as one of the carbonari, by the Austrians, or as a spy, by the Italians. Therefore it is better to betake oneself elsewhere, the poorer by one more illusion. Besides, for the full enjoyment of freedom one needs money; and his bastard of a father (seldom has Beyle found a more courtly epithet for his unhappy parent) has shown once for all what a silly ass a man can be, when, in spite of avarice and hard work the old buffer has not been able to leave the most modest of legacies behind him. Whither? One rots in Grenoble; unfortunately the days of comfortable travel with the rearguard of an army are over and done with since the Bourbon has got his fat fist on the shekels. There seems nothing better to do than return to Paris, return to existence in an attic, and there to grind out a livelihood as a writer, to turn what has hitherto been no more than a pastime into a serious profession.

1828. PARIS. We are in the drawing room at Madame de Tracy's house. She is the wife of the philosopher, Destutt de Tracy.

Midnight. The candles are burned wellnigh down to the socket. The gentlemen play whist. Madame de Tracy,

an elderly dame, is seated on a sofa talking to a marchioness and another lady friend. She is not very attentive to the conversation; her ear is on the stretch. From the next room dubious noises are issuing, the shrill giggle of a woman, the sonorous laugh of a man; then an indignant, "Mais non, c'est trop"; followed by a smothered burst of laughter. Madame de Tracy becomes fidgety; for surely it must be that horrid fellow Beyle, regaling the ladies with spicy stories. He is by nature a clever and refined gentleman, amusing, though somewhat extravagant; but he has been corrupted by the people he associates with, actresses and the like, and especially by that dreadful Italian woman, Madame Pasta. The hostess rises, makes her excuses, and trips away to the neighbouring room, hoping to bring the company there to a sense of decorum. Yes, Beyle is the culprit, withdrawn into the shadow of the chimney corner, doubtless to conceal his wide girth; he is holding a glass of punch in his hand, and is spouting forth a stream of anecdotes that would make a trooper blush. The ladies look as if they were ready for flight; they laugh and protest, yet they stay to hear more, fascinated and inquisitive, completely under the spell of the famous raconteur. He looks like a satyr, red and corpulent, with sparkling eyes, jovial and shrewd. As Madame de Tracy approaches, he breaks off, unable to withstand the severity of her gaze. The ladies seize their opportunity, and, amid laughter, beat a hasty retreat.

The candles flicker out one by one. The lackeys escort the guests downstairs, lighting them on their way with guttering tapers. Three or four carriages are drawn up before the front door. The ladies get in, accompanied by their squires. Beyle is left alone, a disconsolate figure on

the doorstep. No one thinks of giving him a lift. He serves their purposes well enough as a buffoon; otherwise he counts as nothing in a woman's eyes. Countess Curial has given him his congé; he has not enough money to keep a dancer as his mistress; age is slowly creeping upon him. He walks home through the rain, thoroughly out of humour. What matter if his clothes are soiled with mud? His tailor's bill has not yet been paid. He sighs deeply. The best life had to offer lies away in the past, one ought really to make an end of oneself. He clambers up to the top story of the house where he lives in the Rue de Richelieu. His breathing is heavy. Lighting a candle, he runs his fingers through sheafs of papers. This does not mend his mood. A pitiable balance sheet, indeed! His fortune is spent, his books bring in nothing, only seventeen copies of his *Essai sur l'amour* have been sold in eleven years. No later than yesterday, his publisher had quizzically remarked: "Votre livre est sacré, car personne n'y touche!" Thus his income has dwindled to five francs a day—a tolerable competence for a handsome youth, but miserably inadequate to supply the needs of a stout, middle-aged gentleman who loves women and liberty. Better put an end to it all. For the fifth time in the course of this dreary month, Henri Beyle sits down and writes his will. "I, the undersigned, bequeath to my cousin Romain Colomb, all my belongings at No. 71, rue de Richelieu. I wish to be taken straight to the cemetery, and the expenses of my burial shall not exceed thirty francs." Then, as postscript: "I beg Romain Colomb to forgive me for causing him the annoyances which lie ahead of him; above all I enjoin him not to grieve over this unavoidable event."

"This unavoidable event." His friends will understand

the cryptic words when, summoned to the dead man's room, they find the bullet in his brain instead of in the army revolver! To-night, however, Henri Beyle is weary. He will wait till to-morrow before he commits suicide. Next day, some friends drop in and cheer him up. As they rummage his quarters, one of them happens upon a piece of paper inscribed with the word "Julien." What does it mean? They are inquisitive to hear. "Oh, I was thinking of writing a novel," answers Stendhal. His friends are enthusiastically in favour of the idea; they succeed in putting courage into the melancholic's heart. He sets to work. The title "Julien" is replaced by another which is destined to become immortal: *Le Rouge et le Noir*. From that day, "Henri Beyle" ceases to exist. His place is taken by another, Stendhal by name, whose fame will never pass away.

1831. CIVITA VECCHIA. A fresh transformation.

Great guns fire a salute, colours are dipped, as a man of portly figure, dressed in the over-elaborate uniform of the French diplomatic and consular service steps ashore. Attention! This fine person in an embroidered waistcoat and gold laced trousers is the consul of France, Monsieur Henri Beyle. Again an upheaval has flung him into the saddle: last time it was war; to-day it is the July revolution. Now we do well to vaunt our liberalism, to make known how opposed we were to the Bourbon regime. Thanks to the good offices of our lady friends we have been sent as consul to the beloved south. Beyle was to have gone to Trieste, but unfortunately Herr von Metternich regarded the author of certain obnoxious books as an undesirable alien, and refused him a visa. So he must e'en make the best of the matter and settle down in Civita

Vecchia; when all's said and done, the place is in Italy, and France will pay her consul fifteen thousand francs a year.

Need the reader blush if he cannot straightway point to Civita Vecchia on the map? Certainly not. Of all Italian cities, this is the most pitiable, a breeding-place of diseases, scorching in the heat of the African winds, a silted-up haven dating from classical antiquity, a town that has fallen upon evil days, deserted, dull, empty; "one perishes of boredom" there. Henri Beyle's chief pleasure in this God-forsaken hole is to leave it as often as possible, to shake off his official duties, and betake himself to the highroad leading to Rome. He should be sending in reports, conducting negotiations, sitting in his office, and so forth. But the dunderheads in the Foreign Office at Paris never read his dispatches, so why waste brains and hard work upon so unappreciative an audience? He therefore thrusts all the work on to his subordinate's shoulders. This man, Lysimaque Caftangliu Tavernier, is a scurvy brute whose silence as to his chief's frequent absences has to be bought by procuring the rascal admittance into the Legion of Honour. Even in these matters, Henri Beyle fails in a sense of responsibility. To cheat a government which sends one of its poets to rot in such an execrable post seems to our worthy egoist a plain and honourable duty. Surely it is better to visit the art galleries in Rome in the company of a kindred spirit, or to rush off to Paris under any pretext, rather than to sit tight at one's desk and allow oneself to become dull-witted? Can an intelligent man be expected to find satisfaction for ever in the conversation of an old antiquary like Signor Bucci, or in the empty chatter of the local gentry? Far better to talk to oneself. Volumes of ancient

chronicles are to be purchased at secondhand bookshops, and the best of them can be turned into novels; one may be fifty years of age, but one can always assert that the heart is as young as ever. Yes, that's it: to forget the lapse of time no more is needed than to turn back to one's own life; and our portly consul looks at the lad he was in those far-off days as though he were a stranger: he feels that he is "making discoveries about someone totally alien" to himself. Henri Beyle, alias Stendhal, writes the story of his youth, disguises himself as H. B., as Henri Brulard, so that nobody may guess who his hero really is. He writes the record in thick tomes, forgetting his present self, just as others have forgotten him, living wholly in the past and experiencing as it were a renewed springtime of existence.

1836–1839. Paris.

Back again. How wonderful! Resurrection, a return to the light. God bless all women, every good comes from them. They have cajoled and flattered Comte de Molé, now risen to become minister, so successfully that he has consented to overlook the fact that Monsieur Henri Beyle, who should have been fulfilling his duties as consul in Civita Vecchia, has without permission extended his three weeks' leave to a three-year vacation with never a hint that he means to return to his post. Here he is, comfortably ensconced in Paris, receiving his consular income regularly, in fine fettle, with plenty of leisure, good society, and (in an unostentatious manner) enjoying the pleasures of love. Now he can do what he has so long been yearning to do: pace up and down his room and dictate his novel *La Chartreuse de Parme*. For when a man's purse is lined with a salary duly paid at

regular intervals by the State, when, in addition, the shackles of official duties have been thrown off, then those idiots of publishers need no longer be considered, the idiots who pay a mealy-mouthed writer like Monsieur de Chateaubriand a hundred thousand francs, and grudge Henri Beyle the most paltry remuneration. Once a man is free, he may permit himself the luxury of writing a novel which is neither sugary sweet nor soused with rose-water. For Henri Beyle there is no other heaven than that where freedom abides.

Soon, alas, this heaven of his tumbles about his ears. That splendid, that far-seeing minister, Comte de Molé, his protector (surely a man worthy of a monument if ever man was), is replaced in the foreign office by Marshal Soult. The latter had never heard of Stendhal; all he knows is that Monsieur le Consul Henri Beyle has been appointed and is being paid to represent France in the Papal States, and that instead of performing the duties of his office he has been for three years enjoying himself in the Parisian playhouses. At first the general is surprised; then he becomes indignant. How dare this lazy official live a life of ease and pleasure? He commands instant return to Civita Vecchia. Henri Beyle sullenly puts on his uniform, and "Stendhal" is given the go-by. At the age of fifty-four, Beyle, weary and discomfited, has once more to tread the exile's road. He feels it is for the last time.

PARIS. March 22, 1841.

A corpulent man is dragging his heavy limbs along the boulevard. Where are now those happy days of yore when he trod this same boulevard, twirling his cane, a magnet for women's eyes? He leans upon his stout walking-stick,

every step an effort. Stendhal has grown very old during this last year, the light in his eyes is quenched, his lids are heavy and blue; his lips twitch. A few months ago he had had a stroke—a grim reminder of his first love experience in Milan so long ago. They bled him, and tortured him with salves and mixtures. At length the foreign minister permitted the sick man to leave Civita Vecchia and come back to Paris. But what is Paris to him in his present state? How can he relish Balzac's splendid notice of his *Chartreuse de Parme?* A man who already feels the icy hand of death upon him cannot enjoy these first tender blossoms of celebrity. The sad and weary wraith creeps towards his rooms, hardly raising his eyes to glance at the dazzling equipages, the gaily-chattering crowd of pedestrians, the cocottes rustling by in their silk gowns. He is nothing but a black speck of misery trailing along the brightly-lit street, which is merry with the evening pleasure-seekers.

Suddenly there is a rush towards a certain spot. The stout gentleman has collapsed just in front of the Bourse. He lies there, his eyes staring, his face congested. A second stroke has laid the old man low. Hasty hands wrench the neckcloth away, for it seems to be throttling him. He is carried into the nearest chemist's; thence to his room near by. The place is littered with papers, with notices, with freshly-begun manuscripts, with diaries, and what not. In one of them is to be read these prophetic words: "I do not find it ridiculous to die in the street—so long as this is not done intentionally."

1842.

An enormous wooden chest is being carted by goods train from Civita Vecchia, through Italy to France. It is

addressed to Romain Colomb, Stendhal's cousin and legatee, who proposes to issue a collected edition of all his relative's writings. Why should Romain trouble to do this for a man whose death has been dismissed with a few lines in the newspapers? Out of devotion to his cousin's memory, that is all! He has the chest prized open. What a mountain of papers, how illegible the cramped script, the secret cyphers. What an orgy of writing! A man to write so persistently must indeed have suffered from perennial boredom! Romain selects a few of the more legible, and starts making a fair copy. On *Lucien Leuwen* he scribbles: "Rien à faire"; the autobiographical *Henri Brulard* is likewise rejected as undecipherable; and is doomed to remain in the chest for decades. What's to be done with all this rubbish? Colomb packs everything back in the chest and dispatches it to Crozet, a friend of Stendhal's youth, who, in his turn, sends the stuff to the library at Grenoble where it at last finds a resting-place. The librarian, following the rules of the institution, has each packet docketed, and registered in a book. Requiescat in pace! Sixty folio volumes, Stendhal's life work and his own record of his life, have been buried away in the great mausoleum of books, and can collect the dust of ages, undisturbed. Four decades are to pass by before anyone dreams of soiling his fingers with these dusty folios.

1888. Paris. November.

The population has grown, the town is spreading out in all directions. Paris numbers nearly eight million legs which are not always inclined to walk; so a new omnibus route is planned to serve Montmartre. A tiresome obstruction lies in the way. The cemetery! Technical science

can remedy this: a bridge shall be built, and the living shall pass on their way above the dead. But there are a few of the graves which will have to be disturbed willy-nilly. In the fourth row there is a tombstone, No. 11, a dilapidated, forgotten affair bearing a strange inscription: "Arrigio Beyle, Milanese, scrisse, visse, amò." An Italian buried here? What an odd legend. He must have been a queer sort of man. As chance would have it, someone appeared upon the scene who remembered vaguely that there had once been a writer of the name of Henri Beyle. It was his whim to have the misstatement inscribed on his tomb. Quickly a committee was set up to collect a fund for the purchase of a new marble tablet whereon the same inscription should be engraved. Thus, quite suddenly, in 1888, after forty-six years of oblivion, the name of Henri Beyle was on everyone's lips.

Curious to relate, in that very same year, a young teacher of languages, Stanislas Stryienski, whom fate had doomed to eke out a living in Grenoble, seeking relief from the suffocating boredom of his existence, spent many hours in the municipal library. His attention is attracted to some fusty-looking manuscripts lying neglected in a corner. He rids them of the accumulated dust, unties them, sets himself to read them and to decipher those that are in code. The more he reads the more absorbed does he become. He seeks and finds a publisher: *Henri Brulard*, the autobiographic romance, and *Lucien Leuwen*, see the light of day, and with their appearance the true Stendhal makes his bow to the world. His genuine contemporaries hail his work with enthusiasm, for the author had been born before his time and could only be appreciated by a later generation. Did Beyle himself not say: "Je serai célèbre vers 1880?" The phrase occurs

again and again in his writings: it was then no more than a cry of despair; now it has become an amazing reality. At the very time when his bodily remains were raised out of the earth to be given another sepulchre, the work of his brain was brought forth from the shadows of forgetfulness. An unbeliever had foretold the date of his own resurrection. In his every word he showed himself a genuine artist; by this prophecy, however, he proved himself a seer.

AN EGO AND THE WORLD

Il ne pouvait plaire, il était trop différent.

THE cleavage in Henri Beyle's nature which is reflected in his creative work—this cleavage was inborn, was a heritage from his parents who were an ill-assorted couple.

Chérubin Beyle ("the bastard," as Henri, the exasperated son, was wont to name his father) is the embodiment of the provincial bourgeois, pigheaded, miserly, crafty, wholly devoted to money-grubbing. We have his likeness painted for us in masterly fashion by Flaubert and by Balzac, who have scornfully limned the features of the tribe on the canvas of world literature. From Chérubin the son inherits his thickset, paunchy figure and his absorption in himself, his egoism. Henriette Gagnon, the mother, hails from the south, and has the characteristic features of the Latin peoples. In psychological make-up, she is likewise akin to the Latins. Lamartine might well have written poems in her honour, or Jean-Jacques Rousseau sentimentalized over her, for she was of a tender disposition, musical, rather gushing, sensuous as are so many southerners. From her, Henri inherited his passion for love adventures, his inordinate powers of sensation, his agonizing and almost womanish nervous impressionability. Tossed hither and thither by these two contending streams in his blood, this strange compost of opposing qualities oscillates between the paternal and the maternal legacies, between realism and romanticism. Thus

the writer, Henri Beyle, is doomed from the outset to be a dual personality and to live in two competing worlds.

At an early date little Henri showed a preference for his mother. Indeed, as he himself confesses, his love for her was tinctured with passion. His father is the object of a jealous and scornful hatred, a hatred which is cold-blooded, inquisitorial, and cynical. Psychoanalysts may rejoice, for nowhere in the whole range of literature will they find the Œdipus complex portrayed with greater precision than in the early pages of Beyle's autobiographical romance *Henri Brulard*. But death all too soon claimed the beloved mother. Henri was no more than seven when he was left to the tender mercies of his father. From the day when Henri, a lad of sixteen, left Grenoble in the diligence, old Chérubin was dead so far as his son was concerned. Henceforward young Beyle was silent, inimical, disdainful of the parent he had thus arbitrarily buried out of sight. Yet the old man was not so easily shaken off. For fifty years he persisted under Henri's skin, his spirit continued to move in Henri's blood-current; for fifty years the two psychic inheritances from Beyle and from Gagnon ancestry strove each with the other in Henri's soul, without either tendency being able to conquer. Feeling would at one moment overwhelm intellect, to be in its turn crushed by reason. This product of discord could never wholly belong to one sphere or to the opposing sphere. The intellect and the feelings are for ever at war, and rarely have we been privileged to witness more splendid fights than upon the battleground which goes by the name of Stendhal.

At the outset let it be clearly understood that in these contests there is never a victor, never a decisive action. Stendhal is not conquered by his opposites, nor is he torn

to pieces by them. The epicurean creature is protected from the more tragical blows of destiny by a certain ethical indolence and a coolly observant curiosity which is ever on the alert. All his life he cautiously avoids the disquieting and elemental forces which rise to encounter him; for the first commandment he has engraved on the tablets in his wisdom is "keep your own end up." Just as in practical life he sees to it that he is always placed in the rearguard of the Napoleonic armies, sheltered from the bullets, so also in the battlefield of his soul, Stendhal chooses the part of spectator rather than that of active participator in the life-and-death tussle. He is totally lacking in the ultimate moral self-immolation of a Pascal, a Nietzsche, or a Kleist, each of whom raised the conflict to the plane of a decisive issue. Stendhal is content with the role of onlooker. Aware of the cleavage within him, he is nevertheless able, from the secure vantage ground given him by his spiritual self-possession, to contemplate the duel as an artistic drama. He is, therefore, never completely distraught by the discordances of his being, he does not seriously hate them. Nay, rather, he is fond of them. He loves the precision of his intellect, clear-faceted as a diamond: he considers it a priceless treasure because it helps him to understand the world; because, amid the turmoil of feelings, it bestows on him the power of a candidly serene and unqualified moderation. On the other hand, Stendhal loves his excessive emotionalism and his hypersensitiveness, because they rescue him from the stupidity and boredom of everyday life, because these headlong emotions pluck the soul from the narrow confines of the body and allow it to wing its way through the empyrean. He is quick to realize the dangers of both extremes: the intellect may spoil the moment of

extremest rapture; the feelings, by luring him into realms that lie beyond the range of the definite, may smudge the precision of his mind—and this precision of thought is a vital necessity to Stendhal. He would fain teach his opposites to acquire some of the qualities they lack, learning one from the other. Unwearied are his efforts to intellectualize his feelings, to make them clear and precise; continuous his endeavours to put passion into the rational powers of his mind. All his life, the romantic intellectualist and the intellectual romanticist have to dwell together within the same tense and sensitive body.

Stendhal's formulas, therefore, always result in a fraction, never in an integer. Only in a cloven world can he fully realize his personality. Were it otherwise, his purely intellectual work would have been inadequate, and the lyrical intensity of his feelings would have fallen short. His greatest achievements are due to an intermixture of these innate contradictions. "Lorsqu'il n'avait pas d'émotion, il était sans esprit," he once said of himself. He worships day-dreaming as the most precious need of existence: "Ce que j'ai le plus aimé, était la rêverie." Yet he cannot live without its opposite, alertness: "Si je ne vois pas clair, tout mon monde est anéanti." He is just as dependent upon his intellectual faculties as upon his extravagant idealistic traits; above all he needs those voluptuously tingling vibrations of opposites ramifying into his every nerve. Goethe declared that what men usually spoke of as enjoyment was for him always something that "lay half way between sensation and intelligence." In the same way, Stendhal, thanks to the fiery mingling of spirit and flesh, is able to enjoy the sensuous beauty of the universe. He realizes that it is the contact of his two opposites that generates the spiritual electricity, the sparks

which tingle along the nerve fibres, the crepitating, tense, and stimulating vivacity, which we can still feel to-day on merely opening a book by Stendhal. Thanks to the transference of his vitality from pole to pole, he can savour to the full the creative, illuminating fires of his being; and his instinct of self-glorification, ever on the watch, puts all his passions in motion in order to keep up the tension. Just as the muscles require constant exercise if they are not to become lax, so the psychical powers, if they are to be kept elastic, must be unceasingly exercised, and drilled. This is precisely what Stendhal does by his innumerable and extraordinarily detailed observations in the world of psychological reactions, and he performs his task with a competence rarely exhibited by anyone in the field of letters. He practises his art with the same indefatigable enthusiasm as a musician handling his instrument or as a soldier his weapons. He never tires in the work of training his mental ego. In order to keep the feelings at high tension, in a condition of "érectisme morale," he whips them up every evening by listening to an opera, and even as an elderly man he fearlessly plunges into new love adventures. If he suspects his memory of playing him false, he subjects it to a course of special exercises, sharpening his faculties of perception on the strop of self-observation. He utilizes every book and every conversation for the discovery of "trois ou quatre pieds cubes d'idées nouvelles par jour"; he fills himself with an ever sublimer measure of intensity, exciting himself, straining every nerve only to curb it again; perpetually tuning up his intelligence, constantly forging his feelings anew.

It is owing to this systematic and refined technique of self-fulfilment that Stendhal is able to attain to so high a degree of spiritual delicacy both in the realm of the

senses and in that of the intellect. But one has to pay the penalty for keeping the nervous mechanism in such intense vibration, so alert and knowledgeable and voluptuous. Delicacy implies vulnerability; and that which is a boon for art, denotes for the artist, almost invariably, danger and distress. This super-organized being called Stendhal suffers terribly in his own elemental universe, and is an alien in the lachrymose and sentimental world of his day. A man of so keen an intelligence must inevitably feel every stupidity as an affront; so romantic a soul cannot fail to resent every callousness, every demonstration of spiritual inertia on the part of the average individual. There was once a princess of fairyland who, in spite of a hundred coverlets and featherbeds, detected the pea under her mattress. So does Stendhal wince at every blundering word and every unseemly gesture. False romanticism, coarse exaggeration, pusillanimous vagueness, react on him like cold water on an aching tooth. He suffers as acutely from excess as from dearth, from manifestations of banality as from those of preciosity. "Mes bêtes d'aversion, ce sont le vulgaire et l'affecté."

One evening he was contemplating a Napoleonic battle from afar: the murderous medley, vibrant with the roar of cannon, illuminated in the red glow of the setting sun, touched him to the quick. He quivered in sympathetic horror. Suddenly a general who stood near by was moved to say: "A battle of giants!"—and preened himself on the aptness of his observation. But Stendhal's whole world was shattered by the bathos. He hurried away from the spot, cursing the war, filled with bitterness, disillusioned, bereaved. Muddy thinking, exaggeration in speech, undue exhibition of feeling, always aroused irritation. He could not tolerate his companions because they were purveyors

of sickly romanticism (Chateaubriand) and the pseudo-heroic (Victor Hugo). In general he found his fellow-men difficult to get on with. But this hypersensitiveness was turned against himself, too, at times; he could not escape it. As soon as he detected himself diverging, be it never so slightly, from genuine sentiment, introducing an unnecessary crescendo, lapsing into sentimentality, straying into vagueness or dishonesty, he rapped himself over the knuckles as ruthlessly as any schoolmaster an undisciplined pupil. His alert and relentless understanding tracked any hint of spuriousness into the remotest corners, and inexorably wrenched away every veil. Rarely, indeed, has an artist constrained himself to be thus truthful with himself; seldom has a student of the soul so cruelly supervised his own most secret deviations.

Because he knows himself so well, Stendhal realizes better than anyone else that this superabundant sensibility of nerve and soul is a constituent part of his genius, is his greatest virtue and his greatest danger. "Ce qui ne fait qu'effleurer les autres me blesse jusqu'au sang." For this reason he instinctively, from youth onwards, feels that these "others" are polar opposites to himself, belonging to an alien spiritual family, persons with whom he has no kinship, has no common understanding, no common idiom. Already as an awkward youngster in Grenoble, he was aware of this difference between himself and "the others," when he saw his schoolfellows hallooing in heedless enjoyment; and later, more poignantly, when as a raw subaltern in Italy, he despairingly tried to imitate the enviable swagger with which his brother officers dragged their sabres along the pavement and ogled the Milanese women.

In those days he had blushed at his own inferiority.

For years he had endeavoured to quell his own nature, to swank like the rest of them, to impress the crowd. Gradually, laboriously, and painfully, however, he had come to find a peculiar charm in his irremediable differentiation from the herd. His lack of success with the fair sex was due to timidity, to untimely accesses of shyness; slowly he came to analyze the reasons for his mischance: the psychologist awoke within him. He became inquisitive concerning himself, began to discover himself. At first he noticed merely that he was different from the ruck, that he was more delicately poised, more sensitive, more keen-sighted. None of his associates felt things so passionately as he, none thought so clearly, not one of them was so strangely compounded—capable of the finest sensations, and yet unable to achieve anything in the practical sphere. Doubtless he was not unique; there had been other specimens of this "être supérieur"; how else could he understand Montaigne so well? What an acerb and fundamentally shrewd man this Montaigne was, to be sure, so scornful of everything that was obvious and crude. He could not feel so perfectly at one with Montaigne, with Mozart, unless the souls of them all were similarly touched to fine uses!

Thus at thirty, Stendhal begins for the first time to realize that he is not a failure among men. Rather does he belong to the rare company of "êtres privilégiés," privileged beings who spring up from time to time among the most various nations and races and countries, who are as it were precious jewels shining forth from the ordinary conglomerate. He feels that among them he is at home, whereas among his French contemporaries he feels a stranger, and he therefore throws off his allegiance to France as he would a garment too small for him. He

belongs to another, an invisible fatherland, peopled by mortals endowed with more delicate spiritual organs and more responsive nerves, creatures who never rushed together in dull-witted crowds or assembled in business cliques, but who from time to time sent forth a messenger to their age and generation.

For these "happy few" who do not need emphasis as an aid to understanding, whose instinct guides them to penetrate every hole and corner of the heart, for these alone does he write, transcending the limitations of his own century; to them alone does he reveal the secrets of his sensations. What cares he, now that he has at last learned to despise the crowd, if the vociferous multitude, which is only capable of perceiving the fat and crudely coloured letters of an advertisement, only able to taste overspiced and overcooked viands—what cares he if such persons fail to understand him? "Que m'importent les autres?" He puts the words into the mouth of one of his characters, Julien, but the scornful utterance rises from his own heart. He need not be ashamed that, in so coarse and dunderheaded a world, his writings are not a success! "L'égalité est la grande loi pour plaire"; a man must be on a level with his generation if he is to please the human pack. Thank God for being "un être extraordinaire," "un être supérieur," the unique, the special case, an individual, a different being, not one in a flock of silly sheep! All his external humiliations, his failure to rise in his career, his making a fool of himself where women are concerned, his complete lack of success in the field of literature, everything that seems on the surface to be calculated to depress him, becomes for Stendhal, as soon as he has made the discovery of his own distinctness, a source of delight, is looked upon by him as a triumphal token of

his superiority. His feeling of inferiority becomes sublimated into resplendent arrogance, that delicately poised arrogance of Stendhal's which is only to be sensed by those who understand, that arrogance which is so magnificently cheerful and debonair. He deliberately holds aloof from the commonalty, and has but one aim in life, "de travailler son caractère." For him, now, "il n'y a d'intéressant que ce qui est un peu extraordinaire." Very well, then, let us be extraordinary, let us foster this germ of singularity within ourself! No Dutch tulip-maniac had ever cultivated a new species with greater care and hedged it round with more ingenious precautions than did Stendhal his aloofness. He preserved it in a peculiar essence of his own distilling, an essence he christened "Beylisme"; it was a philosophy which had no other purpose in view than to preserve Henri Beyle unaltered in Henri Beyle. He shut himself away behind a thorny thicket of queerness and mystification; he guarded with the fanaticism of a miser the treasure chamber of his ego, hardly permitting even his most intimate friends a glimpse through the bars.

In order to isolate himself more effectually from his compeers, he deliberately enters into opposition with his generation and lives like his own Julien, "en guerre avec toute la société." As a writer he mocks at style, and proclaims the bourgeois code of laws to be the genuine ars poetica; as a soldier he despises war; as a politician he disdains history; as a Frenchman he gibes at the French. He sets up a barbed-wire fence between himself and his fellow mortals, in order that they may not come near him. Need we wonder that, in the circumstances, he fails to achieve distinction in any career? He is delighted to find that he fits in nowhere, belongs to no class, or race,

or rank, or fatherland; is a two-legged paradox, treading its chosen road upon its own pair of feet, instead of one of a servile flock, following the broad road of success. Better by far to remain behind, to slip aside, to stand alone: free!

With the insight of genius, Stendhal knew how to cultivate freedom, to liberate himself from every coercive influence. When, from time to time, forced by dire necessity, he adopted a profession and donned a uniform, he gave only just so much of his time and energy to his duties as would keep him in his post. No matter the official position he accepted, the profession he practised, the job he undertook—he was a master of tricks and devices to secure unqualified independence. Though his cousin Daru may drape him in a military cloak, he never feels himself to be a soldier; though he may write novels, he never feels he has become a professional man of letters; though he may indue the consular uniform, he is careful to arrange that a substitute shall sit in the consular office and do Henri Beyle's work. But whether he be soldier or civilian, artist or man of science, Stendhal never reveals his true self to his associates, so that none of those who come in contact with him suspect that they are in the company of one of the greatest French writers of the day. With the solitary exception of Balzac, his contemporaries in the world of literature saw nothing more in him than an amusing "causeur," an ex-cavalry officer who occasionally took a ride in their demesnes. Schopenhauer is possibly the only other example of a great thinker living in similar isolation, sundered from his fellows, equally unsuccessful, hedged round by his pride and his unusualness, as was Stendhal, his brother in matters psychological.

Thus a part of Stendhal always eluded those who en-

countered him, and the preservation of this elusive element was his main business in life. He never denied that his introverted attitude was selfish, was autocratic; on the contrary, he vaunted his preoccupation with himself, christening it "egotism." Yes, "egotism," not on any account to be confounded with its plebeian, horny-handed, bastard brother, egoism. For egoism would fain clutch at everything which belongs to others; it has covetous fingers, and is eaten up with envy. It is jealous, petty, insatiable. Even when it possesses a measure of spiritual power, this is not capable of freeing it from its unimaginative brutality in the world of feeling. Stendhal's egotism, on the contrary, has no desire to filch others' possessions. With an aristocratic and haughty gesture, he leaves the money-grubbers to enjoy their hoarded wealth, the ambitious to preen themselves on their successful careers, the place-hunters to display their orders and ribbons, the men of letters to relish the bubble of fame. A lot of good may these things do them! He looks down on them all with a superior smile, ironical, quite devoid of envy or greed. Stendhal's egotism is passionately on the defensive; he never poaches on others' preserves; at the same time he will not allow any to trespass in his sanctum. He builds a Chinese wall around his personality in order to exclude all alien influences, all possibility of the infiltration of others' thoughts, opinions, judgments; his privacy is not to be encroached upon by the common herd. His sole ambition is to keep Henri Beyle in a room apart, in a forcing-house where the rare plant of individuality may grow and blossom undisturbed. For Stendhal wishes his opinions, his inclinations, his delights, his ambitions, and his follies, to flourish for his own gratifications, for himself alone; it seems to him quite indifferent and imma-

terial to what extent a book or an event can be compared with another; he scornfully ignores how a thing may affect his contemporaries, or universal history, or, even, eternity. He describes as beautiful that only which appeals to him personally; he regards as right that only which at the moment he happens to deem suitable; he looks upon those things only as despicable which he himself despises. Nor is he in the least distressed to find himself alone in these opinions; on the contrary, solitude enheartens him, strengthens his self-esteem. "Que m'importent les autres!" Julien's motto will serve his turn equally well in matters of taste.

"But why," breaks in someone in unconscious reproof, "why use such a pompous word as egotism to describe this most readily understood of all readily understood things? Surely it is the most natural thing in the world to look upon that which we ourselves consider beautiful as beautiful, and to order one's life in accordance with what one deems the best?" Certainly matters ought to be like that. But who ever succeeds in keeping genuinely independent in feeling and in thought? Who, having ventured to express an opinion upon a book, a picture, an event, will have the courage to maintain it against the judgment of a whole epoch or a whole world in arms? We are all of us far more influenced by adverse opinion than we admit. We have to breathe the air of our own day into our lungs; our judgments and outlooks come into contact with countless other judgments and outlooks, acting and reacting upon us, blunting a point here, sharpening one there; the invisible waves of mass suggestion circulate through the ether. Man's natural reflex to all these outside influences is by no means self-assertion, but, rather, adaptation of his personal preferences to the

spirit of the time; he capitulates to the feeling of the majority. The whole mighty machine of human society would long ago have come to a standstill if the majority of men had not instinctively, or out of indolence, renounced personal and private opinions. It needs extraordinary energy, and a rebellious, austere, and aspiring courage (how few can boast of the gift!) to be able to withstand this overwhelming spiritual pressure. Rare qualities are needed if a man is to preserve his individuality intact. He must have a profound knowledge of the world, a quick and penetrating mind, a sovereign contempt for the crowd, a bold and amoral unscrupulousness, and, above all, courage, threefold courage, imperturbable courage to uphold his own convictions.

Stendhal was endowed with such courage, he, the egotist of egotists, the adept juggler, the master of the foil, wise with the wisdom of the serpent, "chevalier sans peur et sans reproche" in the defence of his own ego. It does one good to see how doughtily he attacks his own epoch, one against all; how with adroit feints and brusque sallies, with no other armour than his radiant pride, he fences with contemporary society for half a century, often pricked it is true, bleeding from many hidden wounds, but holding himself erect to the end, and never yielding an inch of his own individuality and his own headstrong will. Opposition is the very breath of life to him; independence his delight. There are a hundred examples to show how dauntlessly and impudently this fearless malcontent throws down the gauntlet, challenging public opinion to the fight. In an epoch when everyone is belauding war, when in France "the idea of heroism is inseparably connected with that of a drum-major," he describes Waterloo as an immense medley of chaotic

forces; he unblushingly acknowledges that he is bored to death during the Russian campaign, though historians in general are wont to extol this adventure as an epic of universal history; he is not ashamed to say that a journey to Italy where he hopes to see his beloved is more important than the fate of his country, and an aria by Mozart more interesting than a political crisis. "Il se fiche d'être conquis," he does not care a snap of the fingers if France is occupied by foreign armies; for, being by choice a European and a cosmopolitan, he does not bother about the mad freaks of fortune in war, about opinions which happen to be fashionable at the moment, about patriotism "le ridicule le plus sot," about nationalism et hoc genus omne. All he is interested in is the safeguarding and the realization of his own spiritual nature. The personal note is delicately predominant over the uproar of the cataclysm taking place around him, so that one often doubts when reading his diary whether he could really have lived during this eventful time. In a sense, Stendhal did not take part in any of these happenings, even when he was present on the battlefield or actually sitting in his official chair; he took part only in his own development. He is, therefore, as untrustworthy a witness to the world outside himself as he is a trustworthy witness to the world of his own personality. Rarely, indeed, has an artist lived more unflinchingly, more fundamentally, more fanatically for his own ego, rarely has he evolved a more perfect individual ego, than this heroic and confessed egotist.

Because of his jealously guarded seclusion, the essential Stendhal has come down to us undiminished and fragrant with his own peculiar aroma. Isolation preserves. Just as a fly is preserved in amber or a fern-frond is preserved as a fossil in a rock, so has Stendhal's essence

(thanks to the relentless aloofness of his egotism, which saved him from contact with the disturbing, promiscuous, and disintegrating forces of the epoch in which he lived) been preserved and handed down to us in all its pristine singularity. We recognize in him, "man" par excellence, the eternal individual, the rare and subtle exemplar psychologically complete—precisely because he did not allow himself to be coloured with the dyestuffs of his epoch. No other author's work in the French literature of his century, no other man of letters, has remained so fresh, so new, so intact. His books seem to be for all time, to be full of vitality, because, irrespective of what was going on around him, he lived his own life. A man may serve his fellows quite as effectively by safeguarding his personality from the world, as by sacrificing himself to the world. In so far as he safeguards his ego, he preserves a fragment of earthly truth from the destructive stream of change, a fragment which comes once only and is otherwise doomed to disappear. The more a man lives the life of his generation, the more likely is he to die when his generation passes away. The more a man lives within himself, is sufficient unto himself, so much the more likely is his memory to remain green.

THE ARTIST

A vrai dire, je ne suis moins que sûr d'avoir quelque talent pour me faire lire. Je trouve quelquefois beaucoup de plaisir à écrire. Voilà tout.

STENDHAL TO BALZAC

STENDAL, the most jealous guardian of his ego yet known to literature, never gives himself up wholly to anything, neither to the world of men, nor to a profession, nor to an official post. When he writes books, be they novels or psychological studies, he either incorporates himself into these books or else the books go all awry. Even his passion for writing serves merely to gratify his own desires. Stendhal, who prides himself on never having done anything that did not please him personally, is an artist only so long as he can draw enjoyment from the occupation; he serves art only so long as art serves his ultimate purpose: his delight, his own specific pleasure. One would be tempted to call him dilettante, were it not that a disparaging sense now attaches to the word which once upon a time was used to denote a grand seigneur of the arts, one who from sheer joy, from genuine love, from delight, "diletto," and not from a desire for gain, chose art as his companion. They err, therefore, who imagine that because Stendhal has at length achieved a world-wide reputation, he himself ascribed an important place to his art. How indignant this fanatical devotee of independence would have been to find himself placed in the

ranks of the authors, to be counted among the professional men of letters! It is quite inconsonant with Stendhal's own wishes that so much pother should be made about his literary achievements. In his will he left special directions for having his tombstone engraved with the words: visse, scrisse, amò. But the order of the inscription has been arbitrarily reversed, so that we now read: scrisse, visse, amò. Stendhal was true to his own device: for him living was the primary, the most important thing; writing came after, was secondary merely. Enjoyment was more important than creation, his Self more important than his actions; the whole scribbling business was nothing more than an amusing complementary function of his development, one of the many means for avoiding boredom. He is grossly misjudged if other motives are ascribed to him: literature was for this enjoyer of life merely an incidental means for the objectifying of his personality, it was not in any way a fundamental method of self-expression.

As a stripling freshly arrived in Paris the idea had certainly crossed his mind that he would like to be a man of letters, and of course one who was to become celebrated. What youth of seventeen does not harbour such ambitions? He sharked up a few philosophical essays, began a play in verse which was never completed; but he put no ardour into his work, felt no real ambition. For fourteen years thereafter he completely forgot literature; he passed his days in the saddle or at the office, loafed on the boulevards, paid ineffectual court to the ladies, and was far more interested in painting and in music than in the penman's craft. In 1814, suffering from a momentary lack of funds, furious at having to sell his horse, he hastily put together a volume entitled *La vie de*

Haydn, large portions of the text being pilfered from the luckless Carpani. The Italian, when he discovered how arrantly he had been plundered, raised a great outcry against this "Monsieur Bombet." Nothing deterred, Beyle set to work on a history of Italian painting, which likewise owed most of its pages to other authors, interspersed with a few anecdotes from our hero's own pen. Partly because he was in urgent need of money, partly because it tickled his sense of humour to launch various pseudonyms for the world to puzzle its brains with, he continued the hoax, now appearing as a historian of art, now as a political economist (*D'un nouveau complot contre les industriels*), now as a literary critic (*Racine et Shakespeare*), and now as psychologist (*De l'amour*). These essays in the scrivener's craft reveal to him the fact that "writing is by no means so difficult." If one has a ready wit, if thoughts find quick expression through the lips, there is but a slight difference between writing and conversing; still slighter is the difference between speaking and dictating. Literary labours are not much more than a charming amusement. That he never troubles to place his real name on the title-page of his books is sufficient indication of his complete lack of ambition as an author. Though this "ancien officier de cavalerie" does not find the profession of letters beneath his dignity (indeed, he never values bourgeois respectability) yet authorship is not for him a matter of which an intelligent gentleman will boast, or one into which he will put much ardour. In actual fact, so long as Henri Beyle has a post and regular supplies of cash, he troubles very little about the writer, Stendhal, and tucks the latter away into a corner of his life.

When he is forty years of age he sets himself seriously to the task of authorship. Why? Because he has become

more ambitious? More passionate? More in love with art? Nothing of the sort! He has become more corpulent, that's all; he is more at ease sitting at a writing-table than in the saddle; he is less attractive to women, alas, has less money, and considerably more time on his hands; in a word, he needs a derivative "pour se désennuyer." Just as his sometime thick and bushy hair has been replaced by a wig, so the novel, the romance, must play the part of substitute for real life; he must compensate himself for the decrease in authentic adventures by the creation of fictitious ones. In the end, he comes to find writing an agreeable occupation, and to discover in himself a pleasanter and more intelligent conversational partner than all the frequenters of salons put together. Yes, the writing of novels is a very jolly, cleanly, noble form of enjoyment—so long, of course, as one does not take it too seriously and soil one's fingers with sweat and ambition as those Parisian fellows are wont to do. Literature is a pursuit worthy of an egotist, is an elegant and unfettered outlet for the intelligence; and Stendhal takes increasing delight in it as he gets older. Besides it does not require much exertion; a novel can be dictated in three months or so. There is, of course, the added amusement of making fun of one's enemies under cover of an assumed name, and of pillorying society for its vulgarity; one can reveal the most delicate sensations of the soul, without having to stomach the inane smiles of fools, inasmuch as such feelings can always be fathered on to one of the characters in the novel. One can permit oneself to be passionate without compromising oneself; and, though old age is so near, one can allow oneself to dream like a boy without having to feel ashamed. Thus Stendhal begins to take pleasure in creation, and authorship gradually becomes

his most private and intimate form of self-gratification. But it never occurs to him that he is making a great contribution to the world of art, is making a niche for himself in the history of literature. "Je parlais des choses que j'adore et je n'avais jamais pensé à l'art de faire un roman," he confesses to Balzac. He gives no thought to form, or to the critics, the public, the newspapers, or eternity; all he is concerned with is his own pleasure. Quite late in life, when he is close upon fifty, he happens upon a strange discovery; there is money in books, not much, but enough to make a man independent, to safeguard him from having to rub shoulders with the herd, to rescue him from a subordinate position in which he is forced to give an account of his actions to a bureaucrat. This is enough to spur him forward, for the highest ideals of Henri Beyle's life are solitude and independence.

His books were not a striking success. The public was not used to having its mental food presented in so cut-and-dried a fashion, lacking the spice of oily sentimentality. In addition to creating the persons of the novel, Stendhal had to create a public which would read his books, an élite, "the happy few," as he himself expressed it; but this public did not arise till a generation later, in the nineties of the nineteenth century. The indifference of his contemporaries left Stendhal cold; he despised them too much to worry about their opinions. In any case, his books are so many letters addressed to himself; experiments in sensation, written to expand his own being, to develop to the full the spiritual, intellectual, and scientific capacities of the person he loved best on earth, Henri Beyle. Has he, the timid and obese Henri Beyle, been scorned of women? Very well; in his books he can live

in a waking dream, present himself as a handsome stripling like Julien and Fabrice, boldly uttering the words of love he never ventured to utter in reality. Do the blockheads at the Foreign Office deprive him of the possibility for playing the diplomatist? He can compensate himself for the stupidity of his chiefs by showing his capacity for intrigue, his Machiavellism, his cleverness in threading his way through labyrinthine complications; he can indemnify himself by pillorying the silly fools in effigy, by subjecting them to his condemnation and mockery. There is a note of fervency in the descriptions of the places he loves so well; he recalls the unforgettable days spent at Milan; soon he discovers the sublime pleasure, while still remaining shut away and isolated, of bringing his lonely ego into contact with the world—a world, be it understood, which is not so common and vulgar as the real world, but one which is more consonant with his own tastes, a world more impassioned, more vehement, wiser, brighter, and more untrammelled. "Que m'importent les autres?" Stendhal writes for himself alone. The aging epicurean has discovered a new and subtle form of amusement: by the light of two candles on a plain deal table, in a garret, to write or to dictate. Towards the close of his life, this intimate communing with his own soul becomes more important to him than women and other pleasures, than Café Foys and discussions in the salons; it even surpasses music. Enjoyment in solitude and the solitude of enjoyment, his earliest ideal, is at length realized by him when he reaches fifty, and the realization secures expression in art.

A joy which came tardily, it is true, a joy coloured by the rays of the setting sun and partly hidden by the clouds of resignation. For Stendhal's literary creation started too

late to influence his life; it merely served as a musical accompaniment to the slow process of physical dissolution. He was forty-three when he began to write his first novel —*Le Rouge et Noir* (for an earlier romance, *Armance*, is too slight to be taken seriously into consideration); at fifty, he wrote *Lucien Leuwen;* at fifty-four, *La Chartreuse de Parme.* Three novels are his whole literary accomplishment, three variations on one and the same original and elementary theme: the spiritual history of Henri Beyle's youth, a story the aging Beyle does not wish to see perish and must therefore continually renew. All three might bear the same title as the one adopted by Flaubert (who was born much later than Beyle, and was one of his most ardent detractors), *L'éducation sentimentale*, the education of the emotions.

The three young men—Julien, the ill-used son of a peasant, Fabrice, the pampered nobleman, and Lucien Leuwen, the son of a banker—are all born into a chill world, but they enter life with glowing hearts and immense idealism, are enthusiastic admirers of Napoleon, worship everything that is heroic and great and free. In the superabundance of their feeling, they seek a something better, a something more spiritual, a something more inspired than the actualities of life. All three bring a perplexed mind, and a pure heart filled with restrained passion, to lay at the feet of womankind; each is filled with the romanticism of youth unspotted as yet through contact with the common and calculating world of every day. Yet for each in turn comes a rude awakening, the terrible discovery that in a frozen and hostile environment the fires of the heart must be smothered, enthusiasm denied expression, the real self disguised. Their chivalrous impetus breaks against the mob mind of an

epoch immersed in money making, against the meanness and the poltroonery of "those others" (Stendhal's pet aversions!). Little by little they learn the tricks and dodges of their opponents, cleverness in intrigue, artful calculations; they become crafty, deceitful, cold men of the world. Or, worse still, they become knowing; as calculating and egotistic as Stendhal is in middle age; they become brilliant diplomatists, business geniuses, superlative bishops; in a word, they come to terms with reality and adapt themselves to their surroundings as soon as they feel that they have been thrust forth from their true spiritual world, the world of youth and genuine idealism.

In the sixth decade of his life, Henri Beyle sets himself to the writing of these novels, that he may gather the three young men around him; or, rather, that he himself may relive "sa vie à vingt ans," may passionately relive his youth, his youth when he harboured such shy, reserved, and glowing feelings within his breast, when he had such implicit faith in the world. Only when he himself has become informed, cool-headed, and disillusioned does he tell the story of his heart as a young man, does he portray the everlasting romance of the "beginning." Thus these novels unite in a wonderful manner the fundamental contrasts of his character, unite the lucidity of age with the noble perplexity of youth. Stendhal's lifelong struggle of spirit with feeling, of realism with romanticism, is at last liquidated in three unforgettable battles, each one of them as memorable as Marengo, Austerlitz, and Waterloo.

These three young men, though they experience different destinies and are of varying races and characters, are nevertheless brothers in the realm of feeling: their creator has endowed them all with his own romanticism,

and has given this to them that they may develop it. There is the same tie uniting the three men into whom they grow up: Conte Mosca, Leuwen the banker, and Comte de la Môle; they are all Beyle himself, the intellectualist who has crystallized into pure spirit, the man who has become wise, out of whom every vestige of idealism has been burned by the fires of reason. These transfigurations are symbolical representations of what life makes of the young; they show us how the "exalté en tout genre se dégoute et s'éclaire peu à peu," as Henri Beyle writes of his own life. Heroic enthusiasm is dead, magical intoxication is replaced by a sad superiority of tactic and practice, and elemental passion has to yield to a cold pleasure in the game of life. The three men end by ruling the world; Conte Mosca in his principality, Leuwen on the stock exchange, Comte de la Môle in the realm of diplomacy; but they do not love the marionettes which dance to their pulling of the strings; they are full of scorn, because they know all the pitiable meannesses of their fellow mortals. They have not lost the power of appreciating beauty, have not ceased to thrill responsively to heroism; but the appreciation and the thrill remain in the realm of feeling, and can no longer be translated into action. Gladly enough would they exchange their worldly achievements for the obscure, confused yearnings of youth—which, though it has achieved nothing, can dream of achieving all. Just as Antonio Montecalino, the shrewd, dispassionate, and calculating aristocrat, contrasts with Torquato Tasso, the young and ardent poet, so do these men of maturer years, for whom daily life has become a matter of plain prose, contrast with the young men they themselves once were. Maturity contemplates youth with mixed feelings: would fain be help-

ful, and is none the less hostile; is somewhat contemptuous, and yet is moved to envy. It is the old antithesis between brain and heart, between the waking man and the dreamer.

Stendhal's universe oscillates between these two poles of human destiny, between the boy's vague yearning after beauty and the man's positive will-to-power, a will touched with irony. It is between the vicissitudes of manhood, between age and youth, between maturity and romanticism, that the surging current of feeling finds vent. Women confront these striplings, who though shy are burning with desire; women, by the music of their goodness, assuage the torment of unfulfilled craving. They provide a pure and glowing outlet for youthful passion, these women of Stendhal's, noble in character one and all, Madame de Rênal, Madame de Chasteller, La Duchezza di Sanseverina. But not even this hallowed surrender can preserve the young men's pristine purity of soul, for at every step forward into life they plunge deeper into the morass of human baseness. Here again we have a contrast. These heroic and aspiring women, capable of providing the spirit of youth with wings, are contraposed to the commonplace world of reality and of practical life, to the cunning and crafty brood of petty intrigues and placehunters, to mankind as Stendhal sees it through the spectacles of his contempt. In retrospect he contemplates these women with the eyes of his youth, and glorifies them, for even as an elderly man he is still in love with love; taking them gently by the hand, he leads these adorable idols forth from the most secret haven of his heart, and presents them to his heroes. At the same time, with all the vigour of his pent-up wrath, he thrusts the baser wretches down into the shambles. Out of offal and fire

he creates his judges, his lawyers, his pettifogging ministers, his parade-ground officers, his chatterers of the salons; and all these creatures, sticky and malleable as mud, all these nullities, increase and multiply till they become the great majority of mankind, and succeed (as is ever the way on earth) in crushing the sublime. Throughout Stendhal's works, the tragical melancholy of an incurable enthusiast goes hand in hand with the keen-bladed irony of a disillusioned man. In his novels Stendhal depicts the world of reality with a hatred no less strong than the glowing passion with which he paints the world of his fancy; he is as great a master in the one field as in the other; he belongs to two worlds and is equally at home in either, whether it be the world of the intellect or that of the feelings.

Stendhal's novels probably owe a good deal of their charm and distinction to the fact that they are the product of a man in his maturity, a man whose memories are still fresh and whose survey of events has been well pondered before setting it to paper, whose writing is youthful in sentiment and impregnated with a wise deliberation as far as the thoughts are concerned. Distance alone is capable of imparting a creative interpretation to the meaning and the beauty of each passion. Does not Stendhal himself write: "Un homme dans les transports de la passion ne distingue pas les nuances"; a man cannot know the origin or the limits of his sensations? He may be able to voice his ecstasy in lyrical and hymnal form, sending it forth into limitless space; but he cannot, in the moment of passion, explain the ecstatic rapture and give it epic expression. Analysis demands clearness of vision, cool blood, alert understanding, a position which is above the passionate; it needs a certain lapse of time since the event,

and a steady pulse so that the hand of the sculptor may not tremble. In his novels, Stendhal displays to a supreme degree all these requisites, both internal and external. He, the artist arrived at the boundary line which separates the rise from the fall in a man's life, consciously and knowledgeably portrays the world of the feelings; he recaptures the emotions of the past, understands them, and is able to bring them into the daylight, to express them while keeping them within due bounds. Stendhal's greatest delight, the impulse which urges him to the task of writing these novels, is the opportunity it affords him to contemplate this inner world of his revived emotions.

The outward husk, the technique of novel writing, is of little importance to our artist; he improvises as he goes along. Indeed, having come to the end of a chapter, he has no idea what is to happen in the following. The episodes are not always compatible with the characters, and Goethe, who was one of the first to read Stendhal with appreciation, did not fail to point this out. In a word, the melodramatic side of the stories could have been concocted by Mr. Anybody. Stendhal is a genuine literary creator only in the passionate moments experienced by his heroes. His writings have artistic worth and vitality only insofar as they depict the inner currents of life. They are at their most beautiful where one feels that the author has spiritually participated; they are incomparable where Stendhal's own shy and reticent soul is allowed to speak through the words and deeds of his favourites, where he allows his characters to suffer on account of the cleavage within his own nature. The description of the battle of Waterloo in the *Chartreuse de Parme* is a masterly résumé of the years he spent in Italy as a youth. Just as Stendhal himself had been drawn to Italy, so his

Julien is attracted to Napoleon, hoping to find upon the battlefields that spirit of heroism which he feels to be astir within his own soul. But the rude hand of reality tears the veils from his idealistic concept. Instead of clashing cavalry charges he experiences the senseless confusion of modern warfare; instead of the Grande Armée, he finds a rout of men fleeing before the foe; instead of heroes, he encounters cynical soldiers, as mediocre and second-rate in their fine uniforms as dozens of other men in drab coats. These disillusionments are limned with marvellous insight. No other artist has succeeded in depicting with such intimacy of touch the way in which the ecstasy of the soul is again and again bruised upon the rock of hard reality, until at length, too weary to rise, it resigns itself to its defeat. Stendhal's psychological genius triumphs precisely in those moments when the senses and the brain generate electric sparks through contact one with another, and when the two opposites in his disposition meet. He excels himself as an artist only when he makes his characters experience what he himself has experienced, and his portrayals are complete only when he is in perfect spiritual accord with his creations. His art, too, therefore, is autobiographical, and discloses the most intimate secrets of his personal life. "Quand il était sans émotion, il était sans esprit."

Yet strangely enough it is this quality of sympathetic understanding which Stendhal is at most pains to conceal. He is ashamed lest some casual reader shall detect how much of himself has gone to the making of Julien, Lucien, and Fabrice. No one must ever guess that his soul has been breathed into these imaginary beings. Stendhal, therefore, adopts the style of the dispassionate chronicler, of the police-court recorder: "Je fais tous les efforts pour

être sec." He would have been nearer the truth had he written: "pour paraître sec." One must indeed be dull of perception not to detect behind this "dryness" the emotional participation of the author. Stendhal, so full of passion, is never cold in his writing. In truth he is an impassioned novelist, if ever a novelist was impassioned. But his passion is deliberately kept out of sight. Just as in daily life he is desperately concerned lest he shall "laisser deviner ses sentiments," so in his writings he tries to conceal his emotion beneath a veil of assumed impassivity. He refuses to wear his heart upon his sleeve, for nothing is more distasteful to him than the public display of emotion; his sense of spiritual discretion makes him shrink away in disgust from the man who tells his story in a voice choked with tears; he loathes the guttural "ton déclamatoire" of a Chateaubriand, who transfers the bombastic mouthings of the boards into the realm of literature. Better by far to appear hard than "larmoyant," better be lacking in art than become pathetic, better be logical rather than lyrical!

Stendhal therefore chews his every word to exhaustion before he spits it out into the world, and in order to acquire the style of his desire he assiduously cons the bourgeois code ere he sets himself to work in the morning. Nevertheless, dryness is far from being Stendhal's ideal. With his "amour exagéré de la logique," he aims at making his style as inconspicuous as possible so as not to obscure the vividness of his picture: "Le style doit être comme un vernis transparent: il ne doit pas altérer les couleurs ou les faits et pensées sur lesquels il est placé." The mere words are not to obtrude themselves upon our notice by assuming the lyrical form, the colorature, the "fiorituri" of Italian opera. On the contrary, the

words must play second fiddle to the events and thoughts, or, to change the metaphor, they must, like a well-tailored suit, fit the situation so becomingly that they are forgotten, and only the spiritual movements they clothe find palpable expression. Clarity is Stendhal's chief aim. His Gallic instinct for lucidity makes him abhor everything which savours of muddleheadedness, of sentimentality, of pomposity, of turgescence: above all he dislikes that succulent sentimentalism which Rousseau introduced into French literature. Stendhal wants precision and truth to be part of every feeling, even the most confused; he wants clarity to penetrate into the labyrinthine ways of the heart. "Ecrire" spells for him "anatomiser," that is to say the dissection of every sensation into its component parts, the measurement of heat in degrees, the examination of the emotions with clinical accuracy as though they were an illness. In art, as in life, the only thing which bears no fruit is vagueness, confusion of thought. One who befuddles himself with emotion sinks into the quagmire of his own feelings. While he is sleeping off the fumes of intoxication, he misses the highest, the most spiritual form of enjoyment: consciousness of enjoyment. But he who plumbs his own depths with clearness of vision is able to relish these same depths, to contemplate them with manly and genuine appreciation. While realizing the confusion of his feelings he can simultaneously recognize their beauty. Thus Stendhal is fond of putting into practice the old Persian precept which tells us to ponder with the waking mind that which the ecstatic heart betrays in moments of passionate exaltation. He is at once the most blissful servant of the soul, and yet, by his clear-cut logic, he remains master of his emotions.

To know his own heart; by understanding, to enhance

the mystery of the emotions because one has fathomed them—such is Stendhal's formula. The children of his fancy, his heroes, feel just as he feels. They, too, have no wish to be fooled, to be swept off their feet by emotion, but would fain keep watch over their feelings, hearken to them, plumb them, analyse them; they want to understand their emotions as well as to feel them. No phase, no mutation, is allowed to escape their vigilance; they test themselves to see whether their emotions are genuine or false, whether some other, still deeper feeling does not lie concealed behind. They are statisticians of their own hearts, alert and unsentimental observers of their own sentiments. They are continually asking themselves: "Do I love her already? Do I still love her? What did I feel then and why don't I feel the same now? Is my affection genuine or is it feigned? Am I merely playacting where she is concerned?" They keep their fingers upon the pulse of their emotions and are instantly aware when excitement quickens the beat. Their self-scrutiny mercilessly confronts their self-surrender; with the precision of an insensate machine they reckon up the expenditure of feeling. In the very moment of rapturous fulfilment they pause to consider; "pensait-il" and "disait-il à soi-même," constantly crop up to impede the restless movement of the story. Every stretch of the muscles, every twitch of the nerves, is commented upon with the accuracy of a physicist or a physiologist. These peculiarities endow them all with the typical Stendhalian cleavage of character: they enthusiastically calculate their sensations, and with cool deliberation they make up their minds to experience an emotion just as if it were a business affair.

As an example I will cite the well known love scene in

Rouge et Noir. Here, in the very article of ecstasy, when the maiden he loves is about to give herself to him, Julien remains fully intellectualized, painfully wide-awake. He is risking his life in order, at one o'clock at night, to visit Mademoiselle de la Môle. To reach her, he has had to place a ladder near the open window of her mother's bedroom. Surely passion, the spirit of romance, should be supreme? But the critical intelligence is still dominant! "Julien was much perplexed, he was at a loss what to do, he felt not the smallest particle of love. In his bewilderment he thought it incumbent upon him to be bold, and he therefore made to embrace her. 'Fie!' said she, thrusting him away. Her repulse pleased him immensely. He hastened to cast a glance around the room." Thus intellectually conscious, thus cool and deliberate in thought, are Stendhal's heroes even at the height of their most daring adventures. Let us follow the scene to its close; let us see how, after all the reflections and meditations in the midst of the lovers' excitement, the young maid gives herself to her father's secretary. "Mathilde found it hard to address him with the familiar 'thou,' and, when she did, the word lacked tenderness and therefore gave Julien no pleasure. He was amazed to find that he had as yet no sensation of happiness. In order that he might experience this emotion he took refuge in deliberation, reminding himself that he was in the good graces of a young girl who was, in general, chary of her praise. The reflection brought him happiness, for it gratified his vanity." What are her thoughts meanwhile? "I must talk to him. One is supposed to talk to a lover." To paraphrase Gloster, did ever man and woman woo one another in such a vein? What other writer has ventured to allow his characters to control themselves, to calculate their actions with such

composure, in circumstances of high tension? And Stendhal's characters are by no means persons of a fishy disposition!

Here we approach the innermost technique of his psychological exposition, a technique which smothers the fires and disintegrates feeling into its impulses. Stendhal never contemplates an emotion as an entity, but always as a compost of innumerable details; he examines its crystallizations under a lens. That which in the realm of reality takes place suddenly, in one spasmodic movement, is divided by his analytical mind into infinitesimal molecules of time; he shows us a slow-motion picture of the psychical actions, and thus permits us to comprehend them with greater intellectual accuracy. The events in Stendhal's novels take place almost entirely upon the psychical plane, and not in the earthly realm of time and space; they occur, not so much in the lists of objective reality, as in the tumultuous region of the nerves that interconnect heart and brain. Art for the first time is used as an instrument for the elucidation of unconscious functional action. *Le Rouge et le Noir* begins the series of the "roman expérimental," which is later to bring the science of psychology so closely into contact with imaginative writing. We are not surprised to find that Stendhal's contemporaries did not regard this newfangled art as art at all. On the contrary, they looked upon it as antipoetical, as a grossly mechanical and materialistic probing of the soul. Balzac, for instance, had something like a monomania for the study of the impulses, but he regarded them as unified, as integral. Stendhal, on the other hand, put them under the microscope, that he might examine the tiny germs, the true exciters of the strange disease known as love. Doubtless such elaborate methods impede the ve-

hement course of the action, and many passages in Stendhal's works savour of laboratory sobriety, of the dispassionateness of the schoolroom. Nevertheless, Stendhal's furor artisticus is quite as creative as is Balzac's, though the former casts his into a logical mould, fanatically seeking after clarity, and displaying a determination to attain clairvoyance of the soul. His depiction of the world is no more than a medium for the comprehension of the soul; his portrayal of men is merely a preliminary essay for his portrait of himself. Stendhal, the arch-egoist, dispenses passion only that it may return to himself in a stronger and wiser form; he seeks to know mankind in order the better to know himself. "Art for art's sake," the objective delight in presentation, the discovery and the creation of personages for the sheer pleasure in the doing, was neither known to nor practised by Stendhal. Such were his limitations! This master of spiritual autoeroticism, this most self-absorbed of artists, was never able to merge himself wholeheartedly into the world-all, to throw wide his arms and exclaim: "Come, soul of the universe, and penetrate my being through and through." He was incapable of any such ecstatic self-abnegation. In spite of his amazing artistic penetration he was never, not in one single instance, able to understand the art of another man of letters when such an author drew his inspiration, not from the purely human, but from the primal sources of the cosmos—from chaos. The titanic, any Cosmic emotion, any thought of being merged with the universe—these were terrifying to Stendhal. Rembrandt, Beethoven, Goethe, beauty that was stormy or belonged to the sombre realms of thought, these things were a closed book to him. His crystal-clear intelligence could apprehend beauty only when it presented itself

in the Apollonian art, the luminous serenity, of a Mozart and a Cimarosa, whose melodies are clear as spring water; or of a Rafael and a Guido Reni whose pictures are so engagingly simple and easy to understand. The mystery and suffering of the world, Dionysian art, mighty, strenuous, violently destructive, driven onward by daimonic forces, such art was beyond his ken. Nothing in the vast universe held his interest save the human factor; and that human factor consisted, in the last resort, of the microcosm called Stendhal.

To fathom this one entity he became a man of letters; he created characters in order to portray himself. Although genius made him a supreme artist, Stendhal never served art; he made use of art as a delicate and responsive instrument whereby he could measure the rapturous flight of the spirit and express this flight in the music of his prose. Art was never a goal for him, it was always a road leading to his one and only goal: the discovery of his ego, the joy of self-knowledge.

DE VOLUPTATE PSYCHOLOGICA

Ma véritable passion est celle de connaître et d'éprouver. Elle n'a jamais été satisfaite.

A WORTHY cit, meeting Stendhal at a social function, asked him what profession he practised. A quizzical smile puckered Henri's mouth, his little eyes sparkled and glinted impudently, as with assumed modesty he replied: "Je suis observateur du cœur humain." Ironical? Of course! The delight in poking fun at a defenceless bourgeois! And yet behind the bantering words there is a considerable morsel of truth, for in very fact Stendhal devoted the best of his energies to the observation of spiritual happenings; nothing else absorbed his interest as did the passion "de voir l'intérieur des cerveaux." He ranks among the greatest psychologists of all time, among the experts in the topography of the soul, and may be acclaimed the Copernicus of the astronomy of the heart. Nevertheless, Stendhal may well be ironical when he declares that he is a psychologist by profession. For when we speak of "profession," we imply something to which we devote ourselves entirely, a special and purposive activity. Now Stendhal's psychological investigations were never purposive or didactic; they were always casual and ambulatory, made for his own amusement as he sauntered along through life. At the risk of appearing over-insistent, I must repeat that one who should ascribe any kind of earnestness in labour, any rigorous precision, any

emotional or moral purpose to Stendhal, grossly misjudges his character. Sentiment alone was the motive power of this gossamer-like creature of enjoyment, who had taken as his device: "L'unique affaire de la vie est le plaisir." He never propounded complicated systems, he never made or observed any rule of life; on the contrary, he was a dilettante in the original sense of the word, a man wholly absorbed in that which brought him pleasure, without aim and without constraint.

He does not surrender himself to the claims of the work of art with the devotion of a Baudelaire or a Flaubert. When he creates a character, it is the better to enjoy the world, and himself as reflected therein. Similarly, if he goes travelling it is not that he may, like Humboldt, make a careful exploration of the lands he visits; he sets forth in the tourist vein, as a wayfarer enjoying the landscape, the national customs, the women. Again, he is never a psychologist in the professorial sense of the term, he never practises the art of psychology as his main purpose in life, never throws himself into the examination of phenomena with the painful conscientiousness of a Nietzsche or with the distressing remorse of a Tolstoy. Like art, knowledge is for him no more than the cerebral form of enjoyment, and he does not love it as a task but as the most ingenious kind of plaything for the intellect. For this very reason there is always an undertone of joyfulness in every one of his inclinations and pursuits, something spontaneously musical, something jocund and soaring, something buoyant and fiercely avid like a tongue of flame. He must not be compared with the German professor who patiently and laboriously worries his way through to the primeval world, nor with such a keen huntsman as Pascal (or, once more, Nietzsche), who,

thirsty and eager, pursued every phenomenon to its lair. Stendhal's thought-process is full of the champagne of life, is a human craving to know, a light and effervescent intoxication of the nerves; it is that genuine and rare kind of inquisitiveness known as voluptas psychologica.

Few have been more under the spell of this passion for psychological investigation. With all writers of an intellectual bent, it is a master passion; with Stendhal it became almost an obsession. How fine a flair he has for the secrets of the heart, how exhilarating is his psychological insight! Here curiosity, with its sensitive and discerning probe, explores the inner recesses of the heart, and then with subtle lasciviousness extracts the spiritual sap from the living things. His elastic intelligence does not need to come to grips with phenomena; he does not crush them to a pulp in order to fit them to the Procrustes' bed of a preconceived system. All his analyses have the unexpected and delightful fragrance of sudden discoveries, the freshness and cheerfulness of chance encounters. In spite of his virile and aristocratic appetite for the chase, he is too proud to pursue the quarry in heat and sweat, to track it down with a pack of arguments till it stands at bay; he is revolted at the unsavoury task of disembowelling the facts, and, like an aruspex of old, groping among the entrails of the victims. His sensitive perceptions, his delicate organ of touch, make it unnecessary for him to seize æsthetic values roughly in his grasp. The aroma of things, the pellucid aura of their essence, the ethereal radiance of their spirituality, are enough to inform this epicurean genius as to their meaning, and to disclose to him the mysteries of their inner substance; the tiniest movement causes him to feel, the merest anecdote tears away the veils of history, an aphorism is enough to

explain a man. The most elusive and intangible detail, "un raccourci," the rapidest of glances, opens a way for him into the very core of things. He knows that the observation of these "petits faits vrais" is of supreme importance in the realm of psychology. "Il n'y a d'originalité et de vérité que dans les détails," says Leuwen the banker; and Stendhal extols the methods of a generation which was "quite rightly, devoted to detail work." Thus was he foreshadowing our own time, the epoch of those who are no longer content to study psychology upon the foundation of broad and nebulous hypotheses, but minutely examine both the bodily and the spiritual foundations of the mind—investigating the former in the cellular anatomy and physiology of the nervous system, and the latter in the actual workings of the psyche, always with close attention to detail. At the very time when Kant's disciples together with Schelling, Hegel, e tutti quanti, on the imposing eminence of their professorial platforms, were juggling the world-all into their college caps, this one man, Stendhal, spurred forward by his autoeroticism, had, by a brilliant flash of insight, come to the realization that the day of huge philosophical dreadnoughts, of giant systems, was over and done with.

How tremendously Stendhal is in advance of his contemporaries! He outstrips all the psychologists of his day, simply because his mind is not loaded with a mass of ready-made hypotheses; he is a franc-tireur who has no wish to conquer or to subjugate: "je ne blâme ni approuve, j'observe"; he is one who pursues knowledge for the fun of the thing, for his own personal gratification. Like Novalis, his spiritual brother, he cares to catch only the "pollen-grains" of knowledge, chance-blown, wafted to him by the breeze, but instinct with the innermost

meaning of the organic world, reproductive elements, tiny germs charged with invincible potentialities. Only in the scrutiny of the infinitesimally small, in the observation of the fleeting moment when feeling begins, does Stendhal sense the intimate conjunction of body and soul which scholars have named "the enigma of the world."

Thus it is that at the first approach his psychology appears to be no more than a petty art, a play with subtleties. In his novels and elsewhere, Stendhal's discoveries, his opinions and outlooks, seem to do no more than "effleurer les choses"; nevertheless he is convinced that an exact observation, be it never so insignificant, is of far greater value to the understanding of the world of feeling than any theory. "Le cœur se fait moins sentir que comprendre." Just as an attack of fever can be registered by the tiny movements of mercury in a clinical thermometer, so must one be able to read the mutations of the soul as they find expression in the most inconspicuous symptoms. Psychology has no trustworthy means of penetrating into the dark abysses, except the utilization of these chance revelations of the feelings. "Il n'y a de sûrement vrai que les sensations." One need but devote a lifetime to the contemplation of five or six ideas, and already certain laws begin to take shape (nothing dictatorial of course, only of interest to the individual); and these laws assume an aspect of a spiritual orderliness, whose comprehension or mere foreshadowing is the joy and the passion of every genuine psychologist.

Innumerable are the minute and helpful observations we owe to Stendhal; they are concise and unique discoveries which have, since his day, become axiomatic; indeed, they form the starting-point of any serious investigation of the emotional and intellectual world. Stendhal himself

lays no store by his discoveries. He throws his coruscating ideas on paper higgledy-piggledy without a thought of expounding them systematically. These fertile seeds are strewn with a lavish hand in his letters and diaries and novels, scattered haphazard at the moment they are found, and left to be discovered as fate decrees. His whole psychological output is contained in from ten to twenty dozen sentences and in his novels. He rarely gives himself the trouble to collect them, to order them consecutively, to round them into a theoretical whole. Even the monograph on love is nothing more than a pot-pourri of fragments, sentences, and anecdotes. He does not call his treatise "L'amour," but, treading warily, christens it "De l'amour." He deduces no more than the sketchiest of principles whereon to found his ideas, dividing love into "amour-passion," "amour-physique," "amour-goût," and so forth. Or he roughs in a theory concerning love's coming and its disappearance, a pencil sketch (in very fact, he wrote his book in pencil). He confines himself to hints, to suppositions, to noncommittal hypotheses, which he intersperses with amusing anecdotes—for Stendhal had no wish to pose as a profound intelligence, as one who thinks matters out to their logical conclusion, as one who presumes to do the thinking for others; he never follows up a chance discovery.

The solid work of application, of sifting, of upbuilding, is nonchalantly left by this tourist in the Europe of the soul to the draymen and the billstickers of psychology, to those who are fond of labour; and, indeed, a whole generation of Frenchmen has elaborated the themes to which he had so lightheartedly improvised the preludes. Dozens of psychological novels have been written around his famous theory of the crystallization of love, a theory

which compares the awakening of love to the sudden appearance of crystals in a supersaturated solution when certain appropriate physical conditions are supplied ("le rameau de Salzbourg"). Again, Stendhal's casual reference to the influence exercised by race and environment upon the development of the artist gave Taine the clue for his ponderous hypothesis and was the foundation of his philosophical celebrity. Stendhal, however, the incurable do-nothing, the genius of improvisation, never develops his psychological discoveries beyond the fragmentary stage; he contents himself with voicing them in aphorisms, thus following in the footsteps of his predecessors, Pascal, Chamfort, La Rochefoucauld, and Vauvenargues. He does not trouble to find out whether others have forestalled him, any more than he considers the possibility of his successors plagiarizing from himself: he just thinks and observes as naturally, with as little effort, as he breathes and speaks and writes. The idea of founding a school, of proselytizing, of having disciples, never crossed his mind: scrutinizing and again scrutinizing, cogitating and again cogitating, this was joy enough for him. Thinking, like all the other elementary human activities, was for him a simple pleasure, to be lavishly enjoyed.

Stendhal owes his supreme position as a psychologist to the fact that he practises the science as an art and not as a profession. Like Nietzsche, he is not only a bold thinker, but at times a most charmingly impudent one; he is strong enough and audacious enough to play with truth, and to love knowledge with a devotion bordering on the voluptuous. For Stendhal's intelligence is not merely the product of his brain, but is interpenetrated with the vital substances of his whole being. Warm-blooded sensuousness, the spice of irony, the acerbity of bitter experience,

and a pungent mischievousness, all go to the composition of his intelligence; one is conscious of the presence of a soul which has sunned itself in the light of many heavens, has drunk of the winds from many worlds; of a being who has absorbed all the wealth of a universe and yet, even at fifty years of age, is not filled to satiety, but is still eager for more. He is overflowing with vitality, effervescent and sparkling like champagne; and yet his aphoristic sayings are no more than the bubbles at the brim. The rarest treasures are carefully guarded within the goblet which is himself, and which death alone can shatter.

His psychology has none of the precision which is the asset of a well-tutored brain; it is the concentrated essence of an existence, the thought-substance of a veritable man. It is this which makes his truths appear so truthful; his insight so penetrating; his cognitions so universally applicable, and, above all, so unique and so enduring. No amount of intellectual assiduity in thinking can grasp the living reality with such sensuous comprehensiveness as can the spontaneous delight in thinking, the untroubled mental audacity of a sovereign nature. The purposeful becomes petrified in the purpose, the temporal in the time. Ideas and theories are like the shades in the Hades of Homer. They are nothing more than empty reflection until they have drunk the blood of men. Then they acquire voice and form; then they are able to converse with men.

SELF-PORTRAITURE

Qu'ai-je été? Que suis-je? Je serais bien embarrassé de le dire.

STENDHAL was his own master in the art of self-portraiture. And what a consummate artist he was in this field! He once said: "Pour connaître l'homme il suffit de s'étudier soi-même: pour connaître les hommes il faut les pratiquer." To which he hastened to add that he knew men only from books and had never studied anyone except himself. Stendhal invariably took himself as starting-point for his psychological investigations; and his conclusions returned upon himself. But the path encircling this one individual takes him round an orbit embracing the whole expanse of the human psyche.

In earliest childhood he made his preliminary essays in the art of self-observation. The premature death of his dearly loved mother left the little boy forlorn in a hostile and alien world. He had to conceal and deny the impulses of his heart, thus acquiring early in life "the slave's art" of lying. Crouching in a corner, silent, reserved, he would eye these rough and bigoted provincials among whom he seemed to be a fish out of water; he would take stock of his father, his aunt, his tutor, his tormentors, those placed in authority over him, and hatred would sharpen his faculties of perception. Loneliness invariably makes a man more observant of himself and others. Thus already as a child he schooled himself to attention, to act the detective; he cultivated all the wiles

of the subjugated, all the "slavish tricks" of the dependent who is for ever trying to slip through the meshes of the net which has captured him; he sought out people's weaknesses in order to profit by them; in a word he became an adept in psychology because he was misunderstood and because he needed a shield for his own protection.

His second course in psychology lasted till the end of his life. Love and women were his training college. Stendhal is the last to hide the melancholy fact that he was no hero as a lover, no conqueror; least of all a Don Juan, whose mantle he would fain have assumed. Mérimée tells us that, as far as he knew, Stendhal was always in love, and, unfortunately, nearly always unhappy in his passion. "Mon attitude générale était celle d'un amant malheureux," he admits, and goes on to say that few officers in Napoleon's army had possessed so small a number of women as he. Yet he had inherited from his parents, from his broad-shouldered father and his warm-blooded mother, a goodly store of sensuality, "un tempérament de feu," and women were a perpetual fascination to him. He once asked a comrade how best he could proceed in order to win a woman's love. "Ayez-la d'abord," was the answer. But how, he asked himself, can one be sure that she is "haveable"? He was at pains to carry about his person an infallible prescription as to how to overcome a woman's "virtue," a document furnished him by a brother officer. All these devices notwithstanding, Stendhal throughout life cut a sorry figure of a lover. At home, comfortably ensconced at his writing-table, far from the field of operations, this typical example of the anticipator in enjoyment excelled in the art of erotic strategy, "loin d'elle il a l'audace et jure de tout oser": in his diary he makes notes of the exact hour when the

lady who happens to be his goddess at the moment will yield to his advances; "in two days I could have her," he writes in English. But as soon as he is in the beloved one's presence, the would-be Casanova becomes as bashful as a schoolboy; every sortie ends, as he himself declares, in the discomfiture of the man to whose advances the lady is on the point of surrendering.

At the most inopportune moments his timidity would stem the tide of his finest ardours; he would become "timide et sot" just when his gallantry should have been at its most active; or he would be cynical when the circumstances demanded tenderness, sentimental when he should have attacked with decision; in a word, he muffed the most admirable opportunities by over-calculation and undue constraint. The excessive delicacy of his feelings caused him to be awkward; he was so anxious lest he should appear sentimental, "d'être dupe," that he hid his tenderness "sous le manteau de hussard." Hence his frequent "fiascos" in his relations with women, mishaps which were the secret bane of his life. Stendhal longed for nothing so much as for a tangible success in the lists of love: "L'amour a toujours été pour moi la plus grande des affaires ou plutôt la seule." For no philosopher, for no poet, not even for Napoleon himself, did he betray so much respect as for his uncle Gagnon and his cousin Martial Daru both of whom had enjoyed the embraces of countless women without being at pains to make use of any psychological refinements. Indeed, their successes were probably due precisely to the absence of such devices. Gradually Stendhal comes to the conclusion that nothing militates so positively against one who ought to be the conquering male in his relations with womankind as an excess of feeling. He declares that the less trouble a man

takes, the more he assumes a nonchalant attitude as though a mere game of billiards were at stake, the more likely is he to be successful in winning a woman's love. But he himself, he tells us, has "trop de sensibilité pour avoir jamais le talent de Lovelace." He would far rather have been a seducer than the poet and artist and civil servant he actually was.

Stendhal is obsessed by his own inferiority as a Don Juan; no other problem so completely occupies his thoughts. And it is to his persistent work in the anatomizing of his own eroticism that we owe so penetrating an insight into the minutest tracery of his sensations. He himself admits that it was his frequent disasters in his love life that aroused his interest in psychological investigation. Had things been otherwise, he would never have been forced to observe the feminine psyche as he did, he would never have stopped to examine the finest and tenderest emanations from a woman's soul. Women taught Stendhal to test himself, and thus he became the accomplished psychologist he was.

There was a special reason why Stendhal began the task of self-portraiture so early—he had a capricious, an unreliable memory. He was ever pencil in hand scribbling his notes on the margins of books, on scraps of paper, on letters; above all, he recorded his thoughts in his diary. The fear lest he should forget some important experience and thus lose a link in the continuity of his life led him to fix each stir of the feelings, each event, on paper, the moment he had experienced it. In a moving letter to the Comtesse Curial, a letter written with tears and blood, he notes the date when the relationship began and when it ended, the record being made with the cool precision of an entry in an official register. He inscribes the exact

hour when Angela Pietragrua at length yields to his embraces. He exercises the same exactitude in recording his most intimate spiritual experiences, as he does when jotting down the number of francs he spends on food, on books, or in paying his washerwoman. He is perpetually making notes. Sometimes it would seem that he begins to think only when the pencil is between his fingers. To this restless graphomania we owe from sixty to seventy volumes of self-portraiture embodied in all kinds of imaginative works, in letters, and in anecdotes. Even today scarcely half of what Stendhal wrote has been published. He is not urged to so much scribbling by any exhibitionist trend; his impulse is, rather, an egoistical anxiety lest one single drop of the substance that is Stendhal, a substance which has never existed before and will never be created again, should be lost in the sands of his unretentive memory. It is this anxiety which we have to thank for the fact that so much of Stendhal has been preserved for us.

Like everything else in his make-up, Stendhal analyses the unretentive quality of his memory with admirable lucidity. First of all, he recognizes that he is egotistical and lets everything slip away which does not directly concern himself. "Je manque absolument de mémoire pour ce qui ne m'intéresse pas." We therefore find few records of events happening outside the realm of the spirit, hardly any dates, or figures, or facts, or places; all the details of important historical occurrences completely pass out of his mind; even the meeting with such celebrated people as Byron and Rossini fades from his mind; he adds to his memories of objective facts or alters them with wilful or unwitting fabrications, and, far from trying to conceal this defect, he acknowledges it frankly: "Je n'ai

de prétention à la véracité qu'en ce qui touche mes sentiments." In one place he protests that he has no intention "de peindre les choses en elles-mêmes, mais seulement leur effet sur moi." Nothing more clearly shows that for Stendhal "les choses en elles-mêmes" have no existence except in so far as they influence the movements of his own soul. But when outside events exercise such an influence they react upon him with the utmost rapidity and incisiveness. Thus we find that the man who is uncertain whether or not he actually talked with Napoleon, who does not know to what extent his "memories" of the Grand Saint Bernard pass are really derived from an engraving, this same man will remember with the utmost precision the passing gesture of a woman, a tone of voice, a movement, because he himself was stirred by the event. Where his feelings have not been implicated, his memories are clouded, so that whole decades of his life are hidden to us. Curiously enough the same thing happens when he has felt too intensely, as for instance during the passage over the Saint Bernard, on his first journey to Paris, in his first night of love. He often remarks that he has no remembrance of such and such a thing because the emotion he felt was "trop véhément." Excess of feeling shatters Stendhal's impression as an explosion shatters a bottle.

Thus remembrance, in Stendhal, can flower only when the humus of the heart is watered with emotional excitement, and yet it cannot flower if the heart is submerged in too impetuous and stormy a flood. Outside the sphere of the feelings, his memory is not to be trusted, and his artistry suffers likewise: "Je ne retiens que ce qui est peinture humaine. Hors de là je suis nul." The impression must be a spiritual one if Stendhal is to retain it. As an egocentric self-portraitist, he never wishes to pose

as an eye-witness of world-happenings, for he knows that he cannot re-think events; he can only re-feel them. He reconstructs the course of his life by following the devious ways taken by the reflexes of his mind, never by the direct process of conscious rememorization; "il invente sa vie"; he remembers, not facts, but feelings, and out of his memory of the feelings he conjures up his facts. His self-portraiture thus approximates to the novel, just as his novels approximate to autobiography. In many places, his works are what may be paradoxically termed "fictional reality."

Stendhal's reminiscences are, therefore, only reliable insofar as detail is concerned; one must not expect from him any such comprehensive picture as the one given by Goethe in *Dichtung und Wahrheit*. Even as autobiographer, Stendhal remained true to himself, an impressionist, recording in fragmentary form day-to-day observations, jotting down his lightning flashes of insight, assiduously keeping his records decade after decade—of course for his own use alone, "un tel journal n'est fait que pour celui qui l'écrit." And yet—for he remains true to himself—ambiguities, roundabout methods, complexities abound. We know that he writes for a duplex-self; for the writer-self, the self-enjoying ego of 1801, and likewise for the Stendhal of a later day for whose satisfaction he is at pains to depict and to elucidate his life: "Ce journal est fait pour Henri s'il vit encore en 1821. Je n'ai pas envie de lui donner occasion de rire aux dépens de celui qui vit aujourd'hui." The impulse "de se perfectionner dans l'art de connaître et d'émouvoir l'homme," is already at work in the lad of nineteen. We see him at that tender age postulating a shrewder personality than the present one, a "Henri plus méfiant,"

a later and colder Beyle endowed with more sobriety than the youth. He fancies these "mémoires pour servir à l'histoire de ma vie" laid before the fully adult being, for control, and for practical use by that adult. It is almost as if the stripling realized that the fully grown man would eagerly desire the elements necessary for the construction of an integral portrait of himself.

Here, then, we are presented with another side of Stendhal's genius: his clairvoyant preparation of himself for his later self. He fixes the photograph of himself insofar as he gives fixity to the minutiæ, to the "petits faits vrais"—tiny grains of sand which life will place in the hour-glass of the mature man. Jot down the smallest of experiences at the moment when they are warm and throbbing like a bird in the captor's hand; never rely on the memory, that untrustworthy stream which contorts and submerges everything in its current; never feel shy of recording the most trifling incidents! Who knows but what the adult man may find the greatest pleasure precisely in the trifles which welled up from his heart of long ago? It was, therefore, with instinctive genius that young Beyle set himself to write his diary, for it is from this youthful record that Stendhal was later to cull the material for his autobiographical romance *Henri Brulard*, an elderly man's wonderful survey of the years of childhood and youth.

We see him in Rome, seated on the steps of San Pietro in Montorio, an aging man musing over his life's course. In a month or two he will be fifty. Gone for ever the days of his youth, women, love. It is well to ask oneself: "Qu'ai-je été. Que suis-je? Qu'ai-je donc été?" The time for heart-searchings that should fit a man for adventure and for exaltation is past. Now it is seemly to look back

over the road already travelled, and not forward into the unknown. That same night, returning home from a party at the ambassador's, a party where he had found nothing but boredom (seeing that women could no longer be won, and desultory conversation irked him), he suddenly made up his mind. "Je devrais écrire ma vie, je saurais peut-être enfin, quand cela sera fini, dans deux ou trois ans, ce que j'ai été, gai ou triste, homme d'ésprit ou sot, homme de courage ou peureux, et enfin au total heureux ou malheureux." The premonition of the boy becomes a reality for the man, and Stendhal writes a consecutive story of his life, thus coming to a full knowledge of himself by means of an integral description of himself.

An easy thing to propose, but mighty difficult of accomplishment! For Stendhal has made up his mind to be "simplement vrai" in his *Henri Brulard*. He knows how hard it is to be true, to tell the truth when truth shows the writer at a disadvantage; he knows how easy it is for vanity to distort the memory of events. How is a man to find his way through the dark labyrinth of the past, how distinguish between a beacon and a will-o'-the-wisp, how avoid the falsehoods that lie ambushed at every corner? Stendhal discovers a way to shun these pitfalls: "Je prends pour principe, de ne pas me gêner et d'effacer jamais." He will change nothing in the first draft, "pour ne mentir par vanité." He will ride roughshod over shame, will write his reminiscences so rapidly that the censor will not be aroused in time to interfere; the artist must not be given a chance to improve the style; there must be no touching-up, the picture must remain a snap-shot; the record must be made so swiftly that events have no leisure to assume a theatrical pose. Stendhal's pen speeds on wings; he writes quickly and never reads over his pages;

he is quite unconcerned about style, unity, or architectonic; "J'écris ceci sans mentir, j'espère sans me faire illusion, avec plaisir comme une lettre à un ami." He has no wish to lie for the sake of artistic effect as did Jean-Jacques Rousseau. He consciously sacrifices the beauty of his memoirs to straightforwardness; art is sacrificed to psychology.

In actual fact, both *Henri Brulard*, and its sequel *Souvenirs d'un égotiste*, are of dubious artistic worth. Both bear traces of hurry in composition; they are careless, and lack plan. Stendhal throws his reminiscences on paper just as they crop up in his mind, indifferent as to whether they fit the time and place in his book or not. The sublime rubs shoulders with the platitudinous; aimless generalities are interspersed with the most intimate of personal revelations; and verbosity often impedes the "dazzling" development of a dramatic situation. But the flaws only serve to set off the fundamental honesty of the exposition, and every detail is of as much value to psychological science as a whole book could be. Such revelations as his perilous love for his mother, his deadly hatred for his father, things that are usually thrust down into the unconscious and never come to the light of day if the censor keeps good watch and ward, all these intimate secrets of the soul slip through into Stendhal's books during the second when he deliberately relaxes his vigilance. He never allows his feelings time for "moral" reflection, for titivating and making themselves "beautiful." And it is precisely because of this system that he is able to catch them where they are most sensitive, to seize them and record them in their shameless nudity. What tragical alarm and anxiety, what an elemental wrath, surges up from the child's heart in these annals! Who can ever

forget the scene when little Henri, hearing of his Aunt Seraphie's death, throws himself on his knees and thanks God? The child's life had been embittered and made forlorn by this woman, and now he was rid of "one of the two devils, who had been let loose upon my unhappy childhood" (the other "devil" was young Beyle's father). Yet immediately after his prayer of thanks, we find the admission that even this devil had for a moment been able to arouse the boy's precocious eroticism.

The man must indeed have been a genius who could so boldly and so astutely reveal to his fellow-mortals the amazing complexity of the underworld of the emotions. Before Stendhal's day it is rare to find anyone who has shown how innumerable are the strata which go to the composition of a human being, how the most contrary of feelings tingle in the extremest nerve-ends, how in the immature soul of a child we already find the germs of the coarse and the noble, of the brutal and the tender; and it is to this casual discovery that we owe the first of all essays in analytical autobiography. Stendhal is the first to draw a portrait of the ego not as an entity (as Jean-Jacques Rousseau endeavoured to do, not to mention Casanova for whom the ego was the only palpable reality), but as a conglomerate of warring elements, interpenetrating one another, surging over and under and behind one another. Like an archæologist who from a potsherd or from an inscription on a stone can guess the history of days long past, so does Stendhal gather from his minute observations the unending treasures hidden in the human soul, bringing to light the rulers and tyrants of this hidden world, and the wars and battles that have devastated it. Inasmuch as he disinterred and reconstituted his own self, he opened the way for adventurous discovery to those

who came after. It is difficult to point to any other whose curiosity about himself has borne so much fruit and has furnished so great a contribution to scientific knowledge.

What makes *Henri Brulard* such an unforgettable document of the psyche is that the book was written with complete indifference as to form and style, as to posterity and literature, as to ethical standards and criticism. It was written purely to gratify a private and personal enjoyment. In his novels, Stendhal wished to be the artist; but in *Henri Brulard* he was a man, an individual and nothing more, a person impelled by curiosity to know himself. The portrait has all the charm of spontaneity we find in an improvisation. Nothing definitive, nothing complete and finished, comes to trouble the vivid and fascinating picture of his personality. One never "gets through" Stendhal. We are lured on to fresh discoveries concerning him, we would fain unravel new enigmas, we wish to understand him by knowing him, and know him by understanding him. The experimental spirit is constantly wishing to make further experiments on him. Thus his essential being, with its twilight colours, its contrasts of hot and of cold, its vibrant nerves, is as living to-day as ever it was. Because he portrayed himself, he has bequeathed his passion for investigation and his science of psychical observation to a later generation; and, as a true amator, as a consummate lover of his own uniqueness, he has taught us the delight there is to be gained from self-questioning and self-observation.

MODERNITY OF STENDHAL

Je serai compris vers 1900.

STENDHAL, though born in the eighteenth century, the century of the crude materialism of Diderot and Voltaire, overleaped the whole of the nineteenth century and landed in the epoch of psycho-energetics, when the study of the workings of the soul had developed into a science. As Nietzsche says: "Two generations had to pass away before he was overtaken, and before some of the riddles which fascinated him were again brought forward for solution." Stendhal's work hardly dates at all, many of his premises have become the common property of mankind, and not a few of his prophesies are now in course of fulfilment. Though he lagged behind his contemporaries as far as fame was concerned, he has outsoared them all now with the exception of Balzac. These two alone, Balzac and Stendhal, transcended the limitations of their own time: the former by his revelation of the divisions and subdivisions of society, by his disclosure of the supremacy of money, by his prophetic scrutiny of the mechanism of political control; the latter in that, with the penetrating eye of the psychologist, with a genius for grasping at actualities, he was able to reduce the individual to his component particles and to detect the slightest differences in shade and contour. The subsequent evolution of society has proved Balzac's prevision to be correct; the new psychology has shown the soundness of Stendhal's work; for though to their contemporaries their conclusions appeared

disproportionately large or too minutely differentiated, nevertheless these conclusions admirably fit the social and individual conditions of to-day. Balzac's world-embracing vision foresaw the modern epoch and Stendhal's intuition anticipated the modern man.

Stendhal's characters relive in us to-day, they are our very selves, trained in self-observation, informed in matters psychological, cheerfully self-conscious, free from moral prejudices, inquisitive about self, weary of all the cold theories of cognition, and interested only in the throbbings of their own personality. Differentiated man is no longer a monstrosity, he is no longer a special case as he was when Stendhal lived and wrote in a world of romanticist art, for the new sciences of psychology and psychoanalysis have now placed delicate instruments in our hands, so that we may reveal the hidden and disentangle the involved. This "marvellously prescient man," as Nietzsche calls him, though living in the days of post-chaises and wearing a Napoleonic uniform, is amazingly one of ourselves. His total lack of dogmatism, his early preference for being a European rather than a man of some specific nationality, his detestation of the mechanical regularization of the world, his hatred of pompous mass heroics, seem to us parts of our own make-up. How fine is his serene self-composure when compared with the sentimental bleatings of his contemporaries, and how splendidly did he make good by the influence he exerted upon great writers of a later generation. Innumerable are the trails and the ways he has opened to subsequent men of letters: Dostoeffsky's Raskolnikoff is unthinkable had Stendhal's Julien not been created; Tolstoy's battle of Borodino owes much to its classical exemplar, Stendhal's memorable description of Waterloo; and much of

Nietzsche's joy in thinking was derived from the refreshing perusal of his predecessor's works. Thus the "âmes fraternelles," the "êtres supérieurs," whom Stendhal sought in vain during his lifetime, gathered round him in the end, in the only fatherland his free cosmopolitan spirit could recognize and love, the fatherland of men who resembled himself.

Of all his contemporaries, Balzac alone hailed him as brother, and there are none of that generation who are more akin to us to-day in spirit and in feeling than this man, Henri Beyle. Through the medium of cold print and paper we can feel his warm and breathing presence. Although he plumbed his own depths as none other before him, he remains unfathomable. He revels in contradictions, dazzles us with the phosphorescent hues of his enigmatical personality; he lays bare his innermost secrets and hides others from our gaze, fulfilling himself and yet never completing the picture of himself, always and always a live and palpitating personality.

Those who have been out of touch with their own epoch are the very ones whom a new epoch delights to honour. The most delicate spiritual oscillations have the longest wave-length in time and eternity.

TOLSTOY

(1828–1910)

Nothing acts so strongly, and so effectively imposes a like mood on everyone, as a life work, and, in the long run, the work of a whole life.

DIARY, MARCH 23, 1894

PRELUDE

The important thing is, not the moral perfection to which a man attains, but the process of attainment.

DIARY IN OLD AGE

"THERE was a man in the land of Uz . . . ; and that man was perfect and upright, and one that feared God and eschewed evil. . . . His substance was . . . seven thousand sheep, and three thousand camels, and five hundred yoke of oxen, and five hundred she asses, and a very great household; so that this man was the greatest of all the men of the east."

Thus begins the history of Job, who was blessed with contentment until the hour when God raised a hand against him and smote him with sore boils, that he might awaken from his dull satisfaction, might suffer from torment of soul and hold counsel with himself. Thus, likewise, begins the spiritual history of Leo Nikolaevich Tolstoy, who was also the greatest of all the men of his country and his time. He, too, was highly placed among the mighty ones of the earth, living in wealth and comfort in the house of his fathers. His body was overflowing with health and strength. The woman of his choice became his wife, and bore him thirteen children. The work of his hands and his brain proved imperishable, and will be a beacon for all time. Just as the peasants of Yasnaya Polyana bowed low in reverence when the lordly boyar passed them by, so did all the world bow down in deference to his fame. Like Job before the testing, Leo Tolstoy

had nothing left to wish for. In one of his letters we read the bold assertion: "My happiness is without alloy."

Suddenly, betwixt night and morning, all these things became meaningless, worthless. This diligent man conceived a loathing for his work. He became estranged from his wife, grew indifferent to his children. At night, after tossing sleepless upon his bed, he would wander to and fro like a sick man. In the day time, he sat before his writing-table staring into vacancy, unable to put pen to paper. Once he rushed upstairs and locked his fowling piece away, being fearful lest he should turn the weapon against himself. Sometimes he groaned as if his heart were breaking under its load of sorrow. Not infrequently he sat in a darkened room, sobbing like a child. He would not open letters or receive friends. His sons looked askance at their father, his wife despairingly at her husband, who had thus in a moment been overwhelmed with gloom.

Why this sudden transformation? Was he stricken with leprosy or some other hidden and terrible disease? Had disaster befallen him? What had happened to Leo Nikolaevich Tolstoy, that one so rich in worldly goods should in an instant have become so poor in joy, that the greatest man in Russia should be thus overborne by misery?

Terrible was the answer: nothing had happened to him. Or, to be precise (and this answer was more terrible still, and truer), Nothing had happened. Tolstoy had glimpsed the Nothing that lies behind things. Something had given way in his soul, a crack had opened, a narrow black fissure; and he had no choice, in his panic fear, but to go on staring through it into this void, this unnamable Nothing, this nihil, this nullity, this not-self that stretches alien and cold and dark and impalpable, as background to a life pulsing with warm blood; he had no choice but to

contemplate the Nothing which is the eternal framework of our transitory existence.

He who has once peeped into this unutterable abyss can no longer turn away his eyes. His senses are darkened; life has lost savour and meaning. Laughter is frozen on his lips. He can grip naught in his hands without feeling the chill from this realm of non-existence strike inwards from his fingers to his shuddering heart. Everything he looks at is associated in his thought with this other thing that is nihil, is Nothing. Yesterday, the happenings of life were firm, were instinct with the warmth of feeling; to-day they are withered and valueless. Fame is but a grasping at the wind; art is fool's play; money is yellow dross; and one's own live and wholesome body is no more than food for worms. Black invisible lips drain the sap and the sweetness from all that seemed of worth. How cold a place is the world for one to whom this abyss of nonentity has yawned; the "maelstrom" of Edgar Allan Poe which drew everything into its vortex; Pascal's "gouffre," whose depths were deeper than the topmost altitudes of the spirit.

Futile is the attempt to veil it, to hide it. What do we gain by calling this open maw "God," and declaring it holy? What do we gain by pasting leaves torn from the Bible over the fissure? The darkness of the primeval void is so intense that it makes its way through the thickest parchment, extinguishes the altar-lights in the churches; and from the ice-bound poles of the universe there comes a cold too intense to be thawed by the luke-warm breath of the Word. What do we gain by the attempt to drown this oppressive and deadly silence with our shouts, or by preaching at the tops of our voices, as children in a dark wood will sing to scare away their

fears? The silence of Nothing overpowers the efforts of conscious speech. When the murk of this dread nullity has once entered the heart, there to take up its abode, neither will nor wisdom can bring light.

In the four-and-fiftieth year of a life that was exercising a worldwide influence, Tolstoy for the first time perceived this great Nothing, its recognition being his share in the universal human lot. Thenceforward to the day of his death, he continued to stare unceasingly into the vacancy, the impalpable void that lies behind existence. But even when facing that awesome prospect, the vision of Tolstoy was unclouded; it was still the vision of a man who for wisdom and spirituality was unmatched in our day. His titanic energy was unrivalled in the struggle with the unnamable, in the contest with the primal terror of mortal man; never did anyone more resolutely than he contrapose to the question which destiny asks of man, the question which man asks of destiny. No one ever suffered more intensely than he from the empty and soul-cramping prospect of the Beyond; no one endured the suffering with more splendid fortitude, since in him the clear and bold and determined observation of the artist was sustained by a virile consciousness which enabled him to look into the black vacancy undismayed. Leo Tolstoy was the most vigilant, the most sincere, the most incorruptible personality in modern art and literature; and never for a moment did he blench as he faced the tragedy of existence. Nothing could have been more heroic than his endeavour to give form and meaning to the incomprehensible, and to discover a core of truth in the unavoidable.

For three decades, from the middle twenties to the middle fifties, Tolstoy lived a carefree life, immersed

in creative work. For three decades more, down to the end, his thoughts and feelings were monopolized by the endeavour to wrest a meaning from life, to understand the incomprehensible, to reach the unattainable. Things went easily with him until he set himself the task of saving, not himself alone, but all mankind, by his struggle for the truth. His attempt makes him a hero, almost a saint. His failure makes him the most human of all human figures.

LIKENESS

"My face was that of an ordinary peasant."

A FACE overgrown with hair, showing more coverts than clearings, thickets barring the way to inspection of the inner man. The patriarchal beard, streaming in the wind, climbs high up on to the cheeks, for decades hides the full lips, and covers the brown and seamed and bark-like skin. Eyebrows are matted, interlacing like gnarled tree-roots, a finger's breadth in vertical extent. A flood of grey hair foams over the forehead, the spume of the disordered locks. Wherever you look, there is a hirsute profusion that shows all the wanton luxuriance of a tropical forest. As with Michelangelo's Moses (the pattern of virility), the preponderant impression conveyed by Tolstoy's visage is derived from the aspect of the white-foaming waves of his huge God-the-Father beard.

One cannot but try to unclothe this hair-clad countenance in imagination, to clip away the outgrowths, to conjure up the nude face as index to the soul within—and the portraits of Tolstoy in youth, when he was clean-shaven, are a help here. Having done this, we shrink back in alarm. For, undeniably, this man of patrician birth is rough-featured, has a peasant physiogomy. Genius has chosen to inhabit a grimy, low-ceiled hut; the work-room of this brilliant mind is little better than a Kirghiz skin tent. The place has been fashioned by a bungling country carpenter rather than by a Grecian demiurge, a skilled craftsman. Rough-hewn like wood split for firing

are the crossbeams of the forehead surmounting the little windows, the tiny eyes. The skin, like the outer surface of a wattle-and-dab cottage, is of clay, is greasy-looking and lustreless. In the middle of the full quadrangle of the face, we see a nose with gaping, bestial nostrils, a nose that is broad and pulpy as if flattened by a blow from a fist. Behind untidy wisps of hair project misshapen, flapping ears. Between the hollowed cheeks lies a thick-lipped, surly mouth. The general effect is inharmonious, rugged, ordinary, verging on the coarse.

Shadow and gloom brood over all, dullness and weight oppress the melancholy face of this working man; not a sign of upward inspiration, of spiritual radiance, of bold ascent—such as we see in the marble dome of Dostoeff-sky's brow. The visage is unrelieved by a scintilla of light. He who denies this speaks falsely. There can be no question that the face is irremediably common, is shuttered and barred; that it is not a temple but a prison-house for thought; that it is dark, sombre, cheerless, hideous. In youth, Tolstoy knew well enough that his countenance was unpleasing. Any allusion to his appearance was, he said, distasteful to him. "How can a man with so broad a nose, such thick lips, and little grey eyes like mine, ever find happiness on earth?" That was why he soon let the hair grow on his face, that his mouth might be hidden behind a sable mask—which only in old age grew silvered, and thereby venerable. Not until the closing decade of his life was the heavy pall of cloud lifted; not until towards the end of autumn did compensating rays of beauty fall athwart this tragical landscape.

Genius, for ever a wanderer, had here found house-room in a lowly habitation, in a Russian physiogomy of everyday type, within whose walls one might expect

to discover anything in the world except the man who lived for the things of the spirit, except the poet and dreamer, except the creative worker. As boy, as youth, as grown man, and even in old age, Tolstoy could always, as far as appearance went, have been lost in a throng. For him, one coat, or one cap, was as appropriate as another. With such an anonymous all-Russian visage, a man could just as well preside over a council of ministers of State or over a rabble of drunken rascals in a pothouse; could just as well peddle bread in the marketplace, or, in the silken vestments of the metropolitan, hold the cross outstretched over the heads of a kneeling multitude. But nowhere, in any occupation, in any garb, or anywhere in Russia, would such a countenance stand out in contrast to those of the surrounding crowd. When he was a student, Tolstoy might have been the composite embodiment of the youths of his year; when he was an army officer, there was nothing to set him apart from other brethren of the sword; when he had returned to a country life, he would have been perfectly acceptable as the conventional stage figure of the squire. If you see a photograph of him out driving, with a white-bearded retainer seated beside him, you may puzzle your brains a good while before you can make up your mind that the man holding the reins is the coachman and that the passenger is the count. Look at another picture, where he is seen having a talk with some peasants. If you did not know, you would never guess that this Leo sitting among the village elders is a man of rank and wealth, a man of very different birth and station from Grigor and Ivan and Ilya and Pyotr and all the rest of them. His face is so completely anonymous, so perfectly all-Russian, that we must regard him as Everyman; must feel that, for

this once, genius has not donned the semblance of any one man in particular, but is impersonating the people at large. That is why Tolstoy has no face of his own; he possesses the general face of the Russian folk, because in him the whole of Russia lives and breathes.

Hence the disappointment that, to begin with, almost invariably overwhelmed those who saw him for the first time. They had travelled a great distance by train, had driven over from Tula, and were seated in the reception room, full of awe, awaiting the master. Their conception of him was preformed. They expected something mighty and majestic; a man with a flowing beard, like that of God the Father, dignified, imposing, giant and genius rolled into one. Anticipation swelled to awe, as they humbly bowed their heads and lowered their eyes before this imaginary picture of a splendid patriarch, whom they were about to see in the flesh. At length the door opened. Entered a short, thick-set fellow, whose movements were so agile that his beard wagged. As he came in he ran rather than walked; then, pulling himself up, he stood looking with a friendly smile at the startled guest. In a cheerful tone, speaking quickly and easily, he prattled a welcome, offering a ready hand. The visitor, as he took this hand, was nonplussed, was shaken to the soul. What? This genial manikin, this nimble little fellow—could it really be Leo Nikolaevich Tolstoy? Somewhat disconcerted, the guest looked up into his host's face.

Of a sudden, he held his breath in amaze. Like a panther, from beneath the bushy jungle of the eyebrows, a flash sprang forth from the grey eyes, that piercing gaze which no picture or photograph could represent, though everyone who saw Tolstoy has spoken of it. Like a knife-thrust, hard as steel and sparkling, it plunged

home, and held fast. You could not stir; you could not evade it. Hypnotized by its influence, you had passively to endure its probings. No veil could withstand it. Like a projectile it pierced the armour-plate of pretence; like a diamond it cut the glass of every mirror. No one (as Turgenieff, Gorky, and a hundred others have assured us), could continue to dissimulate under this penetrating scrutiny.

Only for a second did the piercing gaze endure. Then, their weapons sheathed, the eyes softened in a gentle and kindly smile. Like shadows of clouds upon the water, all changes of feeling wrought changes of expression in these restless pupils. Anger made them cold, displeasure froze them to crystal, kindliness thawed them, passion made them burn like fire. They could smile with an inner light, these mysterious stars, though there was no change in the hard mouth; and, under the melting influence of music, they could stream with tears as abundant as those of a peasant woman. Clear and bright at one moment from spiritual satisfaction, they would cloud over at the next, grow dark and sad, overshadowed by melancholy, and would then seem aloof and impenetrable. They could be coldly and pitilessly observant; could cut like a surgeon's knife and disclose hidden mysteries like Röntgen rays, to ripple an instant later with good-humoured curiosity. They could speak all the tongues of feeling, these eyes, the most eloquent that ever shone in a human face. Gorky, as was to be expected, has found the most apt description for them: "In his eyes, Tolstoy had a hundred eyes."

In these eyes, and only thanks to them, Tolstoy's face had genius. All the light-energy of the man so richly endowed with vision was concentrated in them; just

as the beauty of Dostoeffsky, the man so richly endowed with thought, was concentrated in the dome of his brow. Everything else in Tolstoy's countenance, the beard, the bushiness, was wrapping, was armature or carapace to safeguard the sparkling jewels, magical and magnetic, which attracted the substance of a world into themselves and radiated it forth once more—the most accurate spectrum of the universe known to our age. A thing might be infinitely small, yet these lenses make it visible; stooping from an inconceivable height like the falcon upon a cowering mouse, they would pounce upon the most insignificant detail, and were equally competent to disclose in a well-rounded panorama the expanses of the universe. They could blaze in the topmost altitudes of the spiritual world, and could with equal success throw a searchlight into the darkest abysses of the soul. They had ardour and purity enough, these sparkling crystals, to contemplate God in an ecstasy; and they had courage enough to contemplate devastating nullity, the Nothing, the gorgon's head that turns the beholder to stone. All things were possible to these eyes; except one, perhaps: to be inactive, to sink into reverie, to enjoy the purely quiescent pleasure of a gracious and happy dream. Perforce these eyes, the instant their lids were lifted, had to quest for prey, pitilessly awake, inexorably free from illusion. They would tolerate no wraith of glamour; they stripped off every veil of falsehood; they tore facile belief to tatters. To them, everything was disclosed in the stark nakedness of truth. It is terrible when such steel-grey daggers are turned against their owner, for then their keen points thrust mercilessly home, and stab him to the very heart.

He who has such piercing eyes, who can see truth,

has at his disposal the whole world and all its wealth of knowledge. One thing he will certainly lack, he whose eyes are ever watchful, and pierce to the inmost heart of truth; he will not have happiness for his portion.

VITALITY AND ITS COUNTER-PART

I should like to live long, very long; and the thought of death fills me with a childlike, poetic alarm.

FROM A LETTER WRITTEN IN YOUTH

RUDE health. A body built stoutly enough to last a century. Big bones and muscles, giving their owner the strength of a bear. Lying on the ground, young Tolstoy can with one hand lift a heavy soldier. Sinewy and elastic, he can beat all comers at the standing jump; he swims like a fish, rides like a Cossack, uses scythe or sickle as well as any peasant. Physical fatigue is unknown to this man of iron frame. His every nerve is tense and vibrant, is at once supple and tough, like a sword of Toledo steel; his every sense rings true, is alert. No weak spot anywhere, no breach or cranny or lack in the defensive armour of vital energies; and never, therefore, does serious illness affect this man of stalwart constitution. Tolstoy has a bodily system endowed with almost incredible powers of resistance, barricaded against every weakness, fortified against the assaults of age.

His vitality is unexampled. Beside this biblical elder, this peasant barbarian, equipped with such stupendous virility, all other modern artists and men of letters look like women or weaklings. Even those who resembled him in their power to maintain creative output when they had become patriarchs suffered in body because the flesh had

grown weary, thanks to the unceasing activity of the spirit, because the sword was wearing out the scabbard. Look at Goethe (a man of kindred horoscope, having also been born on August 28th), whose mental powers were, like Tolstoy's, unimpaired in his eighty-third year; Goethe at sixty had begun to grow stout, and, being nervously afraid of chills, was careful in winter time to exclude every breath of fresh air from his study. Old Voltaire, lean and bony, looks more like a plucked fowl than a human being, as he sits at his desk covering ream after ream of paper with his scribbling. Kant in old age, a mechanical mummy, hobbles stiffly and toilsomely along the Königsberger Allee. But Tolstoy as octogenarian breaks the ice for his daily tub, digs vigorously in the garden, prances over the tennis court. At the age of sixty-seven, he was fired by the ambition of learning to ride a bicycle; at seventy, he was still a redoubtable skater; at eighty, he continued the daily practice of vigorous gymnastic exercises; and at eighty-two, when death was already beckoning, he would make his riding whip sing in the air over his mare's ears when, after a twenty-verst gallop, she halted or stumbled.

The topmost boughs of this giant Russian oak, which is turgid with sap flowing into its finest ramifications, have grown up into the sky of the patriarchial years, without as yet any withering at the roots. The old man's sight remains unimpaired to the day of his death. When out riding in the forest he can see the tiniest beetle crawling over the bark of a tree, and can without a glass discern the falcon soaring on high. His hearing is acute as ever; and his wide nostrils dilate with an animal-like pleasure as he snuffs the breeze. When spring comes its round, the white-bearded pilgrim is overpowered by an intoxication

of the senses, is inebriated by the sharp, ammoniacal odour of the manure that has lain beneath the snows, an odour which now rises into the air and mingles with the fresh smell of the thawing earth. He recalls eighty previous springs, remembers them clearly, each with its own individuality, its own peculiar contribution to the complex of odours, actual and revived in memory. So vivid are the impressions that his eyes fill with tears. Wearing the heavy hobnailed boots of a countryman, and with the vigourous swing of a pioneer, the old fellow strides across the wet soil, which squelches beneath his tread. His hand knows nothing of the tremor of senile decay, and his farewell letter is penned in a script as firm as that of his boyhood's days. His mind shows the imprint of the years as little as his body. His conversation outsparkles that of all others; an alarmingly efficient memory enables him to reconstruct every detail of the past. Nothing is lost, nothing has been obliterated by the friction of time. Still, when he is thwarted, he knits his brows angrily; still he bursts into laughter as hearty as a youth's; his speech is still full of picturesque imagery; his blood still courses swiftly through his veins. When he is seventy or more, during a discussion concerning *The Kreutzer Sonata*, someone remarks that at the author's age it is easy to abjure the lusts of the flesh. The old man fires up, and says with mingled pride and anger: "You are mistaken; the flesh is still powerful; even now I have to wrestle with it."

Nothing but this irrepressible vitality can explain Tolstoy's unflagging creative energy. During the sixty years of his authorship, there was not one that lay fallow. His mind never rested; his senses never slept, never even indulged in a comfortable doze. Right on into old age, he had no experience of grave illness; working ten

hours a day, he laughed at fatigue; his energies never drooped, never needed whip or spur. He used no stimulants, drank neither wine nor coffee, never heated his blood with meat or strong waters. Without these artificial aids, thanks entirely to their own native vigour, his senses were so keen, so lively, so perpetually on the stretch, that the lightest touch would set them tingling, the merest drop would make their brim-full cup overflow. For, his magnificent health notwithstanding, Tolstoy was a "sensitive." Indeed, he could not have been the supreme artist he was, unless he had been irritable in the physiological sense of the term, unless he had been "thin-skinned." The key-board of his nervous system needed to be touched lightly, for the vehemence of the healthy response made all emotion dangerous to him. That is why (like Goethe and like Plato) he was afraid of music, which stirred too readily the waves of feeling, aroused too forcibly the hot-blooded passions. "Music has a terribly powerful effect on me," he declared. In very truth, when the family was assembled round the piano, quietly listening, of a sudden Tolstoy's nostrils would begin to twitch, his brows would draw together, he would become aware of "a strange sense of pressure in the throat"—and he would jump up and hasten from the room, not wishing to burst into tears before them all. "What does this music want of me?" he said once, alarmed at his own subjugation. He realized that it really did want something of him: that it threatened to wrest from him something which he, for his part, was determined never to yield up; something which he had hidden away in the lowest nooks of feeling, though it was now in a ferment, and on the verge of breaking forth. Something mighty, something whose strength and exuberance he dreaded, was stirring within

him. In defiance of his will, the storm of sensuality was rising from the depths, was seeking an outlet. He, who hated and feared sensuality (perhaps because he, better than any, knew its might), regarded women, regarded Woman, with an aversion that was unnatural in a healthy man, was proper to none but an anchorite. "Woman," he wrote, "is harmless only when she is wholly engrossed in the duties of motherhood, is a paragon of modesty and virtue, or has acquired the venerability of old age"—in a word, when she does not exert the lure of sex, which Tolstoy throughout life regarded as "the sin of the body." For this anti-Hellene, this Christian extremist, this monkish zealot, woman and music were instinct with evil because, by awakening sensuality, they tended to turn men away "from the inborn qualities of courage, resolution, reasonableness, justice"; because, as Father Tolstoy preached in later days, they provoked us "to the sin of fleshliness." They, too, "wanted something of him," something which he could not give; they, too, tended to stir something which he did not wish to have awakened. What this was can be discovered without any elaborate search. It was his own excessive sensuality, which, after years of struggle, he had at length succeeded in subduing. For him it was like a crouching beast, whipped into submission, slunk into some out-of-the-way corner of his being, tremblingly ready to leap from its lair if the master's watchfulness were for a moment relaxed. Music was a charm which lulled the master's will, and the "beast" thereupon was ready to seize its opportunity. Let a woman appear, and the whole pack of the bloodthirsty passions began to bay, to rage against the iron bars of their prison. Tolstoy's rabidly monkish anxiety concerning matters of sex, his fanatical detestation of even the most healthily cheer-

ful, nakedly natural sensuality, warrant the inference that within him a fierce virility, a passion like that of a rutting stag, lay hid. We know that in youth, passion led him into the wildest excesses, so that he described himself to Chekoff as having been "an indefatigable whoremonger"; that thereafter, for fifty years, the beast was kept in the cellarage, walled in there, but alive. His writings, characteristically puritanical, show in one thing only that the exuberant sensuality of youth remained exuberant throughout his prime and far on into old age. His acute anxiety concerning matters of sex betrays him; his attitude of the hermit who has fled into the wilderness to escape the promptings of the flesh, the ultra-Christian ascetic, quaking with terror as he forcibly turns away his eyes from "Woman," from the temptress who is in very truth nothing more than the phantom form assumed by his own immeasurable lusts, reveal the story of his inward struggle.

Always and everywhere we feel that what Tolstoy dreaded most in the world was himself, his own bear's strength. His delight in his splendid health was invariably shadowed by his panic fear of the bestial unrestraint of the senses. True, he controlled them as few others before him or since; but he knew that he had to pay the penalty for being a Russian, and therefore an inheritor of a passion for excesses and extremes. That was why it became a point of prudence with him to tame his body by trying to weary it; that was why he always kept his senses on the stretch, gave them plenty of exercise, supplied them with fresh air and an abundance of harmless amusements. He tired his muscles out by berserker activities with plough and scythe, by vigorous games, by riding and swimming to the point of exhaustion. In an open-

air life, he could find an outlet for energies which, had he been pent up at home, cut off from free contact with nature, would have been a torment and a danger. That was why he was so devoted to the chase, in which all his senses could be indulged, both higher and lower. Then feelings which were at other times repressed became active; the slumbering instincts of Muscovite and perhaps Tartar ancestors awakened, the instincts of the wild horsemen of the steppes, of nomadic and fighting races; sensuality raised its head once more. The Tolstoy of the pre-apostolic days was intoxicated by the smell of sweating horses, by the excitement of riding hell-for-leather, by the joys of the hunt and the kill; he took a savage delight (which the apostolic Tolstoy, the advocate of an all-embracing compassion, found incomprehensible) in the terrors of the quarry. "The pangs of the dying beast give me exquisite pleasure," he avows when he has brained a wolf with the butt end of his gun; and this outburst of blood-lust is an index to the brutality which found issue during the mad years of youth, but was sternly repressed throughout the remainder of his life. Long after he has, on moral grounds, abandoned all these blood-sports, his hands twitch involuntarily when, out walking, he puts up a hare; the fettered instincts rattle their chains. Resolutely, however, he calls his passions to heel, and in the end he is content to gratify the lusts of the flesh by an innocent delight in the contemplation and delineation of all that lives—a delight that remains ecstatic to the end. The instant he goes out into the open and enters into communion with nature, his sportive senses are quickened, begin to appraise, to appreciate and to apprehend. Now the veriest trifle can excite interest and arouse enthusiasm. He laughs heartily on catching

sight of a fine horse; pats and strokes the warm, silken neck with an almost voluptuous pleasure, heartily enjoying the flow of animal heat by conduction into his fingertips; indeed, the whole world of animality fills him with rapture. For hours he is entranced as he watches young girls dancing, fascinated by the graceful movements of the lithe bodies. When he meets a good-looking man, a handsome woman, he will stop short, enter into conversation, quite forget his surroundings, while he exclaims: "How wonderful a sight is a well-shaped human being!" He loves the body because it is the vessel that holds life, because it has a surface that is sensitively responsive to light, because it inhales the marvellously compounded aromas of the air, because it provides the wrappings for the hot and swiftly flowing blood; he loves the body, in all its swelling fleshliness, as the very meaning and the very soul of life.

A passionate animalist, he loves the body as a musician loves the instrument upon which he plays; he loves the body as man in the natural and elementary form, and he loves himself in the body much more than in the flawed and disingenuous soul. He loves the body in all its shapes and at all seasons from the beginning to the end, and his first conscious memory of this autoerotic passion dates from the second year of his life. The point needs to be emphasized, if we are to realize how crystal clear, how sharply defined, Tolstoy's memories remained, in defiance of the obliterating touch of time. Whereas in Goethe's case and in Stendhal's memory began with the eighth year or at earliest with the seventh, the two-year-old Tolstoy enjoyed feelings that were no less complex, no less multiform, and no less integrated, than those of the full-grown artist. Read his description of his first bodily sensation: "I

am sitting in a wooden bath-tub completely engrossed in the smell (new to me, but not disagreeable) of a fluid with which my body is being rubbed. It must, I feel sure, have been bran-water. The novelty of the impression has its due effect, and for the first time I become pleasurably aware of my little body and of the ribs showing through the skin; I note the smooth, dark cheeks and the turned-up sleeves of my nurse; I perceive the warmth and the wetness of the bran-water, and am conscious of its peculiar smell; but especially do I recall the feeling of smoothness which I experienced whenever I passed my hand over the inner surface of the bath-tub."

Having read this passage, let the reader analyse and arrange the memories of childhood it reveals, let him classify them in accordance with the sensory zones to which they respectively belong. He cannot fail to be astonished at the comprehensiveness of the two-year-old's perceptions. Little Leo *sees* the nurse, *smells* the bran, *distinguishes* the new impressions, *feels* the warmth of the water (heat-sense), *hears* it plashing, *feels* the smoothness of the inner surface of the bath-tub (touch-sense); and all these simultaneous impressions received by the various sensory nerves coalesce into a "pleasurable" self-contemplation of the body as the general surface whereby all the sensations of life pass into consciousness. We see, in his case, how early the suckers of his senses have clung, like limpets, to existence; we see how, already in the little child, the manifold influences radiating from the outer world have awakened a precise, a well-defined consciousness. Readily, therefore, can we understand that when this same child has grown to manhood, when the senses have been stimulated by riper experience, when the perceptions have been intensified by a

maturer consciousness, when the nerves have been more fully awakened by curiosity—every impression will be subtilized and intensified a thousandfold. Then the child's gratification at the discovery of his own body in the bath-tub will have expanded to become a savage and almost frenzied delight in existence, a delight which (just as in the child) mingles outer and inner, the world and the ego, nature and life, in a unified paean of intoxication. The fully grown Tolstoy, merging himself with his environment, often does so in an ecstasy which borders on drunkenness. Read how he goes into the forest that he may contemplate the world which has singled him out from among millions to perceive it, to feel it, more intensely and more wittingly than them all; he fills his chest and flings his arms wide, as if he hoped to embrace the infinite. Read how, moved no less strongly by the infinitely small than by the infinitely large, he stoops to smooth out tenderly the leaves of some trampled plant, or with passionate joy he looks at the quivering wings of a dragon-fly; then, since his friends are watching him, he turns his face away lest they should see that his eyes have filled with tears. No other contemporary writer, not even Walt Whitman, has so keenly felt the bodily pleasure of the fleshly organs. This Russian, sensuous as Pan, as much at one with the world-all as was that ancient God of the Hellenes, is unrivalled for the vigour and success with which—looking, handling, probing—he makes every item in the universe his own. We understand his extravagant and boastful-seeming assertion: "I myself am nature."

This Russian oak, spreading its branches wide, a universe within the universe, is firmly rooted in the earth from which it springs. Nothing, one would think, could

threaten its stability. But even the solid earth trembles now and again, quakes under Seismos' touch; and Tolstoy, no less, trembles from time to time, his steadfastness shaken. His eyes are fixed in a rigid stare, and he gazes into vacancy. Something that he cannot understand has entered his field of vision; something which, scrutinize it as he may, is alien, chill, hostile to the warm, teeming life of the body. To him, a man of the senses, it remains incomprehensible because it is not a thing of this earth; not a thing which he can touch, taste, handle, assimilate. It is an unfriendly shadow behind all the frank delights of the senses; and it cannot be ranged among them, cannot be joyfully accepted as part of himself by this man who feels himself at one with the world of warm, living experience. How is he to face the terrible thought which suddenly splits that world in twain, the thought that these eager senses will one day be stilled; that the hand will no longer be able to feel; that the body through which the blood is coursing so merrily will fall to pieces, and become food for worms; that naught will be left of it but a grisly skeleton? What if it were to seize him, to-day or to-morrow, this Nothing, this black shadow, which is nowhere yet everywhere, which is manifest and inevitable and palpable though invisible and incomprehensible? Tolstoy's blood ran cold when the thought of death forced itself upon him. His first encounter with the dread spectre took place in childhood, when he was five years old. They led him to his mother's corpse. On the bed lay something cold and stiff, which yesterday had been a living woman. Never could he forget the sight. With a heart-rending cry, he tore out of the room in a panic, chased by all the furies of terror. Other deaths in the family, his brother's, his father's, his aunt's, had a similar effect on him. He

felt as if a cold hand had been laid on the nape of his neck; he shuddered.

In 1869, not long before the crisis in his life, he describes the "white terror" of such an access: "I stretched myself on my couch, but had scarcely done so when a sense of horror forced me to get up again. I had a feeling of intense anxiety, like that which one has when on the point of vomiting. It was as if something had torn my existence to shreds, without quite putting an end to it. Again I tried to sleep, but the terror was there, red, white; something had given way in me, and was none the less holding me together." A dreadful thing had happened. Before death had laid even so much as a finger on Tolstoy's body, forty years before the end, there had come a foretaste which was to endure as long as life lasted. Anxiety sat at night by his bedside; it devoured his joy in life; it lurked between the pages of his books; and it gnawed ceaselessly at his brain, blackening his thoughts and corroding them.

Obviously, Tolstoy's fear of death is as overwhelming as his vitality. It would be a euphemism to speak of it as mere nervousness, comparable with the neurasthenic phobia of an Edgar Allan Poe; with the mystical, pleasurably tinged dread of a Novalis; with the melancholic gloom of a Lenau. In Tolstoy's case, we have to do with a crudely animal, a barbaric, terror; with a violent revulsion of feeling, a hurricane of fear, a panic revolt against death. When he shrinks from the inevitable, it is not as a thinking man, not as one endowed with a virile and heroic spirit. He shrinks as a slave who had been branded would, with a yell, shrink from another application of the red-hot iron; his terror finds vent in animal fashion, taking the form of an explosion of uncontrollable alarm. He manifests the loathing of death which has for

countless generations been incarnate in all creatures that live and breathe, a loathing and a fear that in him find embodiment and voice in a human frame. He rebels against the thought of death; he will not die, he will not —and the realization of what must be masters him none the less, after an agonizing struggle. For we have to remember that the thought takes him by storm at a moment when he feels perfectly safe; that in this Russian bear there is no transition to temper the passage from the idea of life to the idea of death. He is in such rude health that for him death is something utterly alien, whereas for the generality of us there are bridges between the two, bridges on which we have often walked, the bridges of illness. Few are the men of fifty in whom death is not already latent, so that his coming cannot take them by surprise. Hence they do not shrink with so much horror from his first energetic onslaught. Dostoeffsky had once stood, blindfolded and tied to a post, awaiting a volley from a firing squad; and, being an epileptic, he was familiar with the paroxysms in which death comes near. Such a man, accustomed to suffering, is less disconcerted by the thought of death than will be one who has never had an hour's serious illness, has never really had to look his dread adversary in the face. His blood will not run cold, he will not be affected by what we can scarcely avoid calling a craven fear of death. For Tolstoy (who regards life as worth living only when his ego is in the full tide of expansion, when he is "drunken with life"), the most trifling reduction of vitality signifies illness—so that we find him at six-and-thirty already speaking of himself as "an old man." That is why the new sensation makes him feel as if he had been shot through the heart. Only one whose existence is characterized by such

vitality can feel so overwhelming a dread of the non-existence which is the absolute complement of life; only one to whom health is a stupendous reality will be so rabidly insurgent against the yet more stupendous reality of death. But for the very reason that in this case an elemental vitality was confronted by a no less elemental fear of death, there occurred within Tolstoy a veritable combat of the giants, unparalleled in world literature. For only a titan can battle like a titan, can resist like a titan. A masterful man, an athlete of the will, does not capitulate without striking a blow, does not run away from Nothing to seek a refuge behind the church door. After the first shock of the assault, he rallies his forces in the endeavour to overthrow the enemy. Recovering from his initial alarm, he entrenches himself in philosophy, raises the drawbridge of his fortress and bombards the unseen foe with missiles propelled by the catapults of logic. Contempt is his first line of defence: "I take little interest in death, mainly because, so long as I am alive, death does not exist." Death is "incredible." The only thing he is afraid of is, "not death, but the fear of death." He continues (for thirty years!) to reiterate that he has no fear of death, while his asseverations are belied by the fact that from the time he is fifty down to the end he is almost exclusively occupied in discussing the problem of death "with all the energies of the soul." His assurances deceive no one, not even himself. There can be no doubt that for him the wall of spiritual and sensual security had been breached during the first attack of anxiety neurosis, so that all his nerves and all his thoughts lay open thenceforward to assault; that after he had passed the age of fifty, Tolstoy was able to fight only with the aid of vestiges of a self-confidence which had

once been perfect. The more desperately he tries to escape from the obsession, the more clearly does he realize that he has been hopelessly beset. Step by step he has to yield ground, to admit that death is no mere hobgoblin, no mere scarecrow, but a formidable adversary, not to be scared away by brave words. He asks himself whether some sort of accommodation may not be possible; whether, since he cannot go on living in perpetual warfare against death, he may not be able to live on terms of armistice with the enemy.

When he has realized this possibility, there begins a new and fruitful phase in his relations with death. He no longer kicks against the pricks; no longer gives himself up to the illusion that he can keep death at bay with sophisms, or exclude the idea of death from his mind by an exercise of the will: he tries to fit the idea of death into a niche in his daily life, to merge it with that life, to reconcile himself to the inevitable, to "accustom" himself to the thought of death. Giant Life has to admit that Giant Death is invincible; but the thought of death is not invincible, and Giant Life must therefore consecrate his energies to the struggle against this thought. After the manner of the Spanish Trappists, who sleep every night in their coffins in order that familiarity may breed contempt for death, Tolstoy endeavours to steel his will by daily autosuggestion, by a perpetual memento mori, forcing himself to think continually of death without shrinking. All the entries in his diary begin with three mystical letters of the alphabet, the initials of the Russian words that mean "if I live." For years, he begins each month by reminding himself: "Nearer to death." Thus does he habituate himself to looking death in the face. Habit overcomes hostility, and conquers fear, so

that in the course of thirty years death comes to seem a friend rather than an enemy. Death, taken to his arms, is now one of the spiritual constituents of his life, and in this way the erstwhile anxiety is "practically nullified." The white-haired sage can face with composure what used to be an object of terror. "One need not think about death, but one must always have his picture before one's eyes. Then one's life becomes more festive, momentous, sincere, fruitful, happy." Tolstoy has made a virtue of necessity. Adopting the perennial device of the creative artist, he has rid himself of his anxiety by objectifying it. He holds death and the fear of death aloof by incorporating them in the creatures of his fancy. The upshot is that what at first seemed annihilating, ends by making his life more profound, and (contrary to all expectation) promotes the splendour of his art. When he has accepted the fact that he must die, when he has made death his familiar, he knows all about death. Thanks to his heart-searchings, thanks to having already died a thousand deaths in imagination, this devotee of life becomes an expert in the representation of death, the master of all those who have ever depicted it. Anxiety, outspeeding reality, eagerly questioning the multifarious possibilities, winged by fancy and with every nerve aquiver, has always been more creative than heavy-footed and dull-witted health. How much more so, the awakened primal anxiety, the arch-horror of a titan, who has been shuddering, panic-stricken, for decades! This panic terror teaches him to know the symptoms of bodily extinction; he becomes intimately acquainted with every line which Thanatos the destroyer marks with his graving-tool upon the dying flesh; experiences all the miseries and alarms of the soul that is passing into the void. The artist is sum-

moned to his task by the very perfection of his knowledge. The death of Ivan Ilich with his hideous outcry, "I will not, I will not," the pitiful end of Levin's brother, the various passings in *Three Deaths*—how could these greatest of Tolstoy's psychological achievements, these eavesdroppings at the uttermost marge of life, have been possible, but for the author's personal experience, the mental catastrophe through which he had passed, the soul-searching horror he had endured, and the alert, almost superhuman watchfulness of his new poise? Only as a contrast to the radiance of perfect health could the finest shades of thought and the most trifling bodily changes of the dying be described with so much precision. Sympathy pre-supposes that the sympathizer must have gone through a kindred experience—at least in imagination. Before Tolstoy could describe these hundred deaths, he must have lived through them in the recesses of his tortured soul. The apparent meaninglessness of the sudden overshadowing of his existence kindled in the mind of Tolstoy the artist a knowledge of new meanings. Premonitory anxiety was the goad which drove his art from the shallows of life, from the mere contemplation and reproduction of the superficial aspects of reality, into the innermost depths of knowledge. That and nothing else was what enabled him to supplement his Rubens-like vision of actuality by the tragical illumination from within, not so much physical as metaphysical, which animates the canvases of Rembrandt. Because Tolstoy suffered more keenly than other men from the agony of death in life, he was able to limn that agony more vividly than any other writer.

Every crisis is a gift bestowed by destiny upon the creative artist. This boon conferred a new and more per-

fect symmetry to Tolstoy's spiritual outlook on the universe, and likewise to his art. The contrasts interpenetrated one another and won to equipoise; the frenzied struggle between the lust for life and its dread counterpart gave place to a harmonious mutual understanding; the life that was slowly ebbing and the death that was casting an ever deeper shadow before its coming were now splendidly and poietically confluent, wave of creation following wave in the heroic twilight of his declining years. As Spinoza would have it, his tranquillized feeling at length finds repose in a pure suspense between hope and fear of the last hour: "It is not good to fear death, nor yet to long for death. The scales must be so balanced that the pointer is vertical. Life goes best when this condition is fulfilled."

The tragical discord has at length been resolved. The veteran Tolstoy does not hate death, nor flee from it, nor look forward with impatience to the last encounter. He is content to meditate on death serenely, as an artist sketches the outlines of a work which is already finished in the hidden realm of the unconscious. That is why, when the dark hour comes, fate is kindly, giving him a death great as his life has been, a death that is the ripe fruit of his own works.

THE ARTIST

The only true pleasure is the pleasure of creative activity. One can create pencils, boots, bread, children—that is to say, human beings. Without creation, there is no true pleasure, none that is not tinctured with anxiety, suffering, pangs of conscience, shame.

FROM A LETTER

No work of art attains its climax of beauty until those who contemplate it can forget that it is an artificial creation, and are able to regard it as naked truth. Tolstoy's writings often produce this sublime illusion. They seem vividly real. We forget that they are fiction, that the characters are imaginary. When we read him, we fancy that we are looking through an open window into the world of fact.

Were all artists like Tolstoy, we might readily come to believe that art is a simple matter; sincerity, a self-evident affair; imaginative writing, nothing more than a faithful account of reality, an effortless transcription. We might suppose that an author need merely possess (in Tolstoy's own words) "a negative quality, that of not being a liar." His writings have the self-sufficiency, the naïve naturalness, of a landscape; they are as full of life and colour as nature itself. The mysterious powers of poetic frenzy, the fruitful ardours, the phosphorescent vision, the bold and often illogical fantasies, that are elemental in the creative artist, are to all appearance lacking in Tolstoy's epic work, and we fancy that he has no need of them. In his case, not a drunken demon,

but a clear-sighted and perfectly sober man, has been at work, observing facts, recording them faithfully, and with perfect ease fashioning a replica of reality. Thus do we figure his method to ourselves.

Here the perfection of the artist's touch has led us astray, for what is more difficult than truth, more arduous than clarity? The original texts of his works show that Leo Tolstoy was not a man to whom writing came easily. He was one of the most painstaking and diligent of penmen; his literary frescoes were mosaics, laboriously pieced together out of millions upon millions of details, out of countless minute and particular observations. What looks as if it had been sketched freehand in broad and bold and clear outline, has really been the result of strenuous craftsmanship on the part of a man who did not see things in sweeping visions, but set to work slowly and patiently and concretely. Like the German old masters, he built up his pictures by stages. First came the groundwork, followed by close attention to the flat surfaces and by scrupulous accuracy in contour and line. In the next stage, the colour tone was added. Not until then did he endow his epic fable with the radiant actuality of life, by developing of set purpose the lights and the shades. *War and Peace*, which runs to two thousand pages, was written over and over again, seven times in all. Great chests were filled with the notes and references concerning this book. Every detail was checked with meticulous care. In order to give an accurate description of the battle of Borodino, Tolstoy spent two days in the saddle, riding hither and thither over the battlefield, map in hand. He journeyed far to visit survivors, on the chance of being able to glean picturesque items. Not content with printed books, with ploughing through the contents

of public libraries, he wrote to the heads of noble families and to the keepers of archives asking for a sight of letters and other documents which might yield up to him some fragment of truth. Thus in the course of years upon years of labour did he collect innumerable droplets of quicksilver, which coalesced, in the end, into one enormous, well-rounded, and homogeneous globule. Not until his search for truth was finished did he begin to strive for clarity. We know that a writer of lyrics, such as Baudelaire, must polish every facet. Tolstoy, with the zeal of the artist who aims at perfection, was no less scrupulous in scouring and refining, in hammering and oiling and smoothing his prose. A redundant sentence, an inappropriate adjective, in a voluminous book, would exercise his mind so much that, after reading and correcting and returning proofs, he would telegraph and have the press stopped in order to modify a discordant syllable. This first printing was cast back into the crucible of his mind, there to be melted once more, and refashioned. If ever an art was laboured, the epithet applies to the seemingly effortless, outwardly natural and spontaneous work of Tolstoy. During seven years, he toiled for eight or ten hours a day. Can we be surprised that, robust though he was, he should have suffered from a psychical collapse after production of each of his great novels? His stomach would go on strike, his senses would be clouded, and the man who had just written a masterpiece would be affected by a sense of failure intensified to the verge of melancholia. Then his only resource was to seek solitude. He had to get far away from civilization, live in a Bashkir hut on the steppe, diet himself on koumiss for awhile, and thus regain his equanimity. This writer of epics that are Homeric in their grandeur, this raconteur whose tales are pre-

eminently natural and crystal-clear and endowed with the primitiveness of the folk-spirit, is, under the skin, a profoundly self-critical and self-tormented artist. (Are there any artists of a different kind?) But, as a crowning mercy, the toilsomeness of the process leaves no trace upon the finished product. Of our time, and yet transcending time, this prose which is the outcome of art that conceals art gives the impression of having always existed, of being self-created, ageless as nature. Nothing stamps it as belonging to any specific epoch. If one of his novels were to drop into your hands by chance, and you were to read it for the first time without knowing the name of the author, you would hesitate to guess in which decade or even in which century it had been penned. That is why I describe his writing as timeless. The folk-tales *Three Old Men* and *Does a Man want much Land?* might have been written, like the story of Ruth and the story of Job, a couple of thousand years before the invention of printing, and when the alphabet was a recent discovery. *The Death of Ivan Ilich* and *Polikoushka* and *Linen-Measurer* may belong to the nineteenth century or the twentieth or the thirtieth; for what finds expression here is not the contemporary mind as voiced by Stendhal and Rousseau and Dostoeffsky, but the primitive mind, which is changeless and perennial—the terrestrial pneuma, the primal sentiment, primal anxiety, primal sense of loneliness, felt by man brought face to face with the infinite. Perfect mastery frees itself from the trammels of time. Tolstoy never had to learn how to tell a tale, and he never lost the art. In this matter, his genius was of spontaneous growth. It could not wither, and could neither improve nor deteriorate. Take the descriptions of scenery in *The Cossacks*, written when the author was twenty-

four, and compare them with the incomparably brilliant account of an Easter morning in *Resurrection*, penned when he was sixty, a storm-tossed generation later. Both of them are equally full of nature's direct and universal appeal, both are equally instinct with sensuous enjoyment.

For the very reason that his writing is thus perfected to a degree which lifts it above the realm of the individual and makes it timeless, we are scarcely aware of the personality of the artist in the work of art. We do not regard him as a writer of fiction; he is a master-recorder of realities. We hesitate, in fact, to term him an "imaginative writer," a "poiete," for this name applies to those who modify and mould, producing a new type of human kind, mysteriously interpenetrated with mythos and magic. It applies to the ecstatic, who, in the intoxication of his visions, embodies his ineffable experiences in Pythian words; to the visionary, who finds in melody a solution for the insoluble, and in the symbol an understanding of the incomprehensible.

Tolstoy does not belong to this category. He is not a man of the "higher" type, but wholly of this world; not super-earthly, but the sum and substance of all that is earthly. Never does he outstep the limits of the comprehensible, the clear, the palpable; yet within these limits, what perfection he displays! His qualities are not those of a muse or a magician; they are ordinary qualities, intensified. As compared with Everyman, his mind functions more vigorously, and his senses are keener; he sees, hears, smells more acutely, more extensively, and more consciously, than the average individual, and he has a more delicate sense of touch; his memory is more trustworthy and more logical; his thought-process is swifter, more efficiently associative, and more accurate.

He never crosses the boundary line between the normal and the abnormal. That is why people are slow to speak of him as a genius, though they give this name to Dostoeffsky as a matter of course. His writings are never inspired, never animated with that elemental afflatus of the incomprehensible which is peculiar to the seer, the visionary, the prophet. That is why he is so clear; that is why you can always understand him. His earthbound imagination cannot outsoar the region of "factual memory" to discover something which is not part of Everyman's experience. Hence his art remains positive, intelligible, thoroughly human; a daylit art, depicting reality raised to the *n*th power.

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Tolstoy does not create dream worlds; he describes realities. Consequently, when he is telling a tale, we do not seem to hear an artist speaking, but the facts telling their own story. Men and beasts come forth from his world as if from their own warm abiding-places, moving with their own natural and unforced rhythms. We do not feel that behind them is a vehement being who urges them forward, hounds them along (as Dostoeffsky drives his characters) with a scourge, so that, hot and shrieking, they burst impetuously into the arena of their passions. When Tolstoy is telling a tale, we do not hear his breathing. He tells it as upland peasants climb their native hills; slowly, equably, step by step; without rushes, without impatience, without fatigue, without weakness; and the throbbing of his heart never troubles the smooth tone of his voice. That is why we do not lose our composure when we are in his company. Dostoeffsky hurries us up to the dizzy altitudes of delight; suddenly plunges us into un-

fathomable abysses of misery; and then makes us soar with him in the dreamland of fantasy. But with Tolstoy we are always wide awake, like students of science. We stumble, we doubt, we tire; yet, with his strong hand clasped in ours, we climb his epic mountains stage by stage, the horizon widening as we climb. Incidents disclose themselves slowly; only by degrees does the prospect clear: but everything happens with the assured and infallible movement of a clockwork mechanism, as when, on a hill at sunrise, we watch the light spreading inch by inch across the lowlands. Tolstoy tells his story simply and dispassionately, like the epic writers of early days, the rhapsodists and psalmists and chroniclers of times which had not yet waxed impatient, when nature was still at one with her creatures, before there was an arbitrary classification of beings into humans and animals and plants and stones, and when little things and great were regarded as equally deserving of reverence and equally instinct with the divine fire. He sees things from a universal outlook, anthropomorphically. Although in moral matters no one could be less of a Hellene, in that he is an artist his feeling is thoroughly pantheistical. For him there are no gradations in rank between the howls and twitches of a dying dog, the death of a beribboned and bestarred general, and the fall of a tree blown down by the wind because it has perished at the root. The beautiful and the ugly, the animal and the human, the clean and the unclean—he contemplates them with an artist's vision, as equals in all of which he sees the soul. It matters little whether we say that he naturalizes man, or that he humanizes nature. The result is that, within the sphere of earthly being, nothing is locked away from him. Women

have often asked with amazement how it is that this man can be so familiar with their most intimate and hardly communicable bodily sensations, so that he can describe, as if he had felt them, the dartings and draggings in the breasts of a mother about to give suck, and the agreeable shudder that runs up and down the arms of a young girl who exposes them for the first time at a ball. Could animals read *Anna Karenina* and speak, they would express no less wonder at the uncanny intuition which enables him to sense the eager, painful longing aroused in a spaniel by the smell of snipe, or the instinctive urge to begin a gallop which inspires a thoroughbred when the hunt is up. Here Tolstoy is able by his native powers of perception to realize all that the zoologists and entomologists, from Buffon to Fabre, have learned by elaborate study. Nor is his accuracy of observation affected by preferences for this or that object which comes within his ken; his love knows no favourites. Being incorruptible, he does not regard Napoleon as more of a man than the most insignificant of the emperor's soldiers; nor is this latter a more important being than the cur that runs at his heels; nor yet the dog than the stone which it treads under foot.

One who sees so much and so well does not need to invent; one who observes imaginatively does not need creative imagination. Tolstoy spent his life using his senses, and recording their impressions; he had no dreams of a world beyond reality. His art did not come from above, but worked its way into the interior; it was (to quote Nötzel's admirable phrase) an architecture of the depths, not of the heights. In full possession of his faculties, thereby contrasting with Dostoeffsky the visionary, he never emerged from the confines of the ordinary

to enter the realm of the wonderful. Instead of building an airy edifice in a region of supramundane fantasy, he planted his props in the common earth and in everyday human beings. Moreover, in the sphere of the human, Tolstoy had no need to study abnormal and pathological types; or, going further than this, like Shakespeare and Dostoeffsky, to conjure up new intermediates between god and beast, Ariels and Aliashas, Calibans and Karamazoffs. He burrows into the depths of reality so effectively, that in his presentation the most commonplace peasant assumes a mysterious aspect. As shaft leading into the deeps, anything will serve his turn: a tiller of the soil, a soldier, a drunkard, a dog, a horse, a what-you-will; not costly and rare and subtilized materials, but whatever comes first to hand. Yet he endows these ordinary figures with unprecedented spiritual attributes; and he does it, not by embellishing them, but by revealing their true inwardness. His whole technique is comprised in this revelation of the truth. He uses no other instrument than the sharp and penetrating instrument of truth; but he uses his boring-tool with such relentless vigour, and thrusts it so deep into every happening, every object of contemplation, that, marvelling, we discern a deeper world within the world, a spiritual stratum to which no miner before him has pierced. Realities, not dreams, incite him to his formative task. Like the sculptor, he must have clay to mould and marble to shape; he cannot, like the musician, create out of winged air. It is quite in keeping that Tolstoy should never have written a line of verse, for to him, an arch-realist, poetry of every kind was necessarily antipodal. His books speak the language of naked truth and none other; this is his limitation; but they speak that lan-

guage more perfectly than the books of any other imaginative writer, and this is his greatness. For Tolstoy, beauty and truth are one.

Tolstoy, therefore, is the most clear-seeing of all artists, and yet no seer; he is an incomparably able recorder of truth, while he lacks the power of creative fancy. (I iterate of set purpose, to press my meaning home.) In his task of fashioning an amazingly comprehensive and multiform picture of the world, he has no assistant but the senses five; alert, subtle, swift, accurate, and yet bodily, mechanical, earthly. Not through the nerves, like Dostoeffsky, not through visions, like Hölderlin and Shelley, does Tolstoy secure his supremely delicate perceptions. The co-ordinated activities of his senses are enough. One may conceive of them sallying forth like bees, returning again and again with their load of tinted dust, passionate seekers of the particulate elements of the real, for elaboration into the golden honey of the work of art. Or, to vary the image, this unwinged artist is like a chemist in his laboratory, patiently distilling ethereal oils from sweet-scented blossoms. The simplicity of Tolstoy's writings is always the outcome of overwhelming myriads of detail observations. If Tolstoy is to know a man's thoughts and feelings, he must first of all have studied every jot and tittle of his subject's physical being. He begins like a doctor, with an inventory of the patient's bodily peculiarities. Not until this preliminary investigation is finished does he go on to the epic process of distillation he applies to the universe of his novels. "You cannot conceive," he writes to a friend, "how arduous is the preparatory labour of ploughing the soil in which I purpose to sow the seed. It is terribly hard to consider and reconsider beforehand everything that

may happen to all the characters in the work I have planned. It is very difficult to reflect upon the thousand possible combinations of so many actions, and to choose no more than one out of a million possibilities." Since this process of assembling details and condensing them into a unity (a process which is mechanical rather than imaginative) has to be repeated in the case of each one of the characters, a simple calculation will show that myriads upon myriads of grains must be patiently ground to powder, and the resulting atoms patiently recombined, before the desired form can emerge.

Thus Tolstoy examines all the bodily peculiarities of his dramatis personae with cold accuracy, as with a magnifying glass. After the Holbein manner, line upon line, a mouth is shaped, upper lip and lower lip being separately described with their individual anomalies. Every twitch of the corners associated with particular moods is precisely noted; and the wrinkles or folds that show themselves to express amusement or anger are sedulously described. Then the author slowly paints in the hue of the lips, explores their fullness or their firmness with an investigatory finger, traces the moustache that overhangs them. These details give us the form of the lips, their fleshly characteristics. Then comes a description of their functioning, as influenced by and influencing the voice and the speech—particular attributes of this particular mouth. Nose, cheeks, chin, and hair are described with the same, almost alarming, anatomical accuracy, detail after detail being carved with the utmost precision. Then, in the artist's laboratory, the various acoustic, phonetic, optical, and motor observations are weighed and measured and mutually adapted; for gesture must correspond mathematically with glance, glance with smile, and smile with

verbal emphasis, if the figure as a whole is to exhibit harmonious unity. From this mass of observations, the author proceeds to extract the square root or the cube root. He sifts his materials finely, so that only essentials remain, while unessentials are scrapped. Contrasted, therefore, with the abundance of preliminary details, we have a thrifty use of the derivative attributes—but these few recur again and again throughout the book, so that, after a time, as each figure reappears upon the stage, the appropriate characteristics rise spontaneously in the reader's mind thanks to an associative process. How skilled a craftsman is Tolstoy! He, who seems to describe haphazard, and without set purpose, is, in truth, a past master of his art. A whole book would be needed to trace the mechanism of this method in its minutiae, and to show that the apparent artlessness of Tolstoy's writing is the outcome of an art which creates the persons of his drama by the condensation of a perplexing multitude of observations into a unity.

Not until all the necessary sensual elements have been provided, not until the bodily machine has been completed with geometrical accuracy, does the Golem, the laboratory-made human being, begin to speak, to breathe, to live. In Tolstoy's works, the soul, Psyche, the divine imago, is always prisoned in a thousand-meshed net of observations, enwrapped in and held fast by a web of skin and muscles and nerves. In those of Dostoeffsky, the clairvoyant, Tolstoy's great counterpart, individuation begins at the antipode, begins with the soul. For Dostoeffsky, soul is primary, and spontaneously weaves its own destiny; the body is but a loose and light integument, a thin pupa-case through which shines a fiery core. In happy moments, this fiery core can consume its wrappings, can

free itself, can soar up into the ether of the feelings, into pure ecstasy. But for Tolstoy, the perspicacious, the artist who neither sees visions nor dreams dreams, the soul has no wings, nor even the power to draw free breath. For him, it is always coffined within the body, subject to the inexorable law of gravitation. That is why even the most aspiring of his creatures can never wing their way upwards to God, can never spread pinions that would enable them to outsoar this terrestrial sphere. When they would fain climb towards holiness and purification, they must do so laboriously, step by step, carrying the burden of the flesh. Psyche cannot fly back straightway into the Platonic realm, but must remain on earth while undergoing transformations, subject to the restrictions of gravity and to the universal heritage of original sin. In large measure, the tragical gloom of Tolstoy's work would seem to be dependent upon this primacy which he allots to the bodily over the spiritual; for again and again, when we read this wingless and humourless writer, we are painfully reminded that we live on earth and are doomed to die; that we must ever go afoot; that we cannot shake off the bonds of the corporeal; that in the midst of life we are in death, are face to face with Nothing, are bondslaves to reality, are wanderers in a maze which has no outlet. "I wish you more spiritual freedom," wrote Turgenieff to Tolstoy, with a brilliant flash of insight. We wish the same thing for the characters in Tolstoy's books: more spiritual freedom; the power to soar on spiritual pinions; ability to escape from the circumstantial and the bodily, to become cheerful, light-hearted, carefree; or at least we wish for them a capacity to dream of a purer and serener world.

His art is autumnal. All its outlines rise sharply above the level horizon of the Russian steppe, and the air is

heavy with the acrid smell of withering and rotting vegetation. The skies are uniformly grey; no cloud-shadows drift, like dream smiles, athwart the sombre landscape; the existence of the sun behind the dull canopy of heaven has been forgotten. Hence, the author's cold and clear illumination brings no warmth to the heart and differs greatly from the cheerful radiance of spring, which never fails to arouse a passionate expectation of blossoming in woods and meadows and in the hearts of men. When we read Tolstoy, we feel that winter will soon be here; that nature is dying; that all men are grass, and that our own particular embodiment of the universal human life must ere long perish. We are shown a world without dreams, without illusions, without lies; a terribly empty world; a world without God—for Tolstoy discovers God as an afterthought, because life needs God; just as Kant puts God into the cosmos as an afterthought, for reasons of State. It is a world in which the only light is relentless truth. Perhaps, at first sight, Dostoeffsky's spiritual world may seem even gloomier, more sombre, and more tragical than Tolstoy's, with its equable, cold clarity; but Dostoeffsky often pierces the gloom with flashes of intoxicating rapture, during which, for fleeting instants, we are transported to visionary heavens. Tolstoy's art, on the other hand, knows nothing of the joy of intoxication; it is always as sober, translucent, and uninebriating as water. So limpid is it that we can see into its uttermost depths; yet such glimpses do not take us quite out of our selves or fill our minds with ecstasy. One who, like Tolstoy, can never dream, can never forget the realities of the present to wanton in visions of a beauty that is not of this world, one to whom naked truth is all-important, may have an unrivalled perception of nature's comprehensive grip,

of the inescapable ties of our own warm and living bodies, of the universal destiny of mortal men; but he will never have an inkling of the freedom which enables the soul to escape from the thraldom of its own gloom. These books make readers serious and reflective, as does science with its dry light, its patient boring into reality; they do not confer the boon of happiness.

What did the man himself, this man of profound insight, think of his own unmerciful and disillusioning observation, of his art that lacked the aureate kindliness of the dream, the seductive impetus of cheerfulness, the graciousness of music? At bottom, he never loved it, for it was unable to inspire either in himself or in others a happy and affirmative acceptance of the life it portrayed. How hopeless is the aspect assumed by existence under these remorseless eyes, which look upon the soul as no more than a palpitating little fragment of bodily mechanism amid the vast environing spaces of death; upon history as a meaningless chaos of haphazard incidents; upon human beings as skeletons which for a brief space inhabit tenements of warm flesh; and upon the inexplicable and disorderly activities of these creatures as having no more significance than the running of water or the withering of a leaf. Never for a moment does music sound over this dull succession of ordinary events; never is the burden of this nihilism discarded; never a smile to throw a fugitive charm across these unmeaning activities; always a ruthless, a cruelly sober portrayal of gloom, an uninterrupted analysis of a madhouse drama, the impressions of an embittered observer who will not allow himself to be deluded by any false consolers.

Can we be surprised that, after thirty years of such macabre portraiture, Tolstoy should suddenly have been

seized with the desire to do something else than make his fellows cruelly aware of the inexorability of their earthly lot; should have longed for a method of self-expression which would not only disburden his own shoulders, but would make life easier for others; should have yearned for an art "which would awaken higher and better feelings"? Was it not natural that he should have wished to touch the silver strings of the lute of hope, to develop an art that would help to deliver people from the weight of earthly things? Vain the desire, vain the attempt! Tolstoy, pitilessly keen of vision, with eyes focused to see things as they were, could not see them otherwise; could not but see life as overshadowed by death, as a dark and issueless maze. His art, which did not know how to lie and did not wish to lie, could not bring solace. Presumably that was why in old age, since he could not look upon life or describe it as anything other than a tragedy, Tolstoy became inspired with the hope that life itself could be changed; that men and women could be made better, could be animated by a moral ideal; that a kingdom of heaven could be built in the soul, as a retreat from the gloomy realm of the mechanical and the corporeal. Thus, in his second phase, Tolstoy, as artist, is no longer satisfied with describing life; he tries to give his art an ethical meaning, to subordinate it to a moral task, to devote it to the service of purifying and uplifting the soul. Henceforward his novels and his tales are not merely to image life but to mould it; they are to present prototypes of the right way of acting. A new and desirable type of humanity is to be sharply distinguished from the type of those who have not yet become aware of the truth, and the former is thus to become a model for the latter, to be "educative." The writings are to be something more than

entertaining and descriptive; they are to be "stimulating"; they are to warn the reader by bad example, and to encourage him by good example. The new Tolstoy, not content to be life's recorder, has become its judge.

This doctrinaire trend is already manifest in *Anna Karenina*. On the plane of the unconscious there is still more evident an intention to contrast the respective destinies of the moral and the immoral. Vronsky and Anna, unbelievers, living for the pleasures of the senses, egoists enslaved by their own passions, are "punished," are cast into the purgatorial fires of spiritual unrest. Kitty and Levin, on the other hand, rise to heights of purification. For the first time the author, hitherto incorruptible, takes a side for or against the creatures of his own fancy. He has discovered a moral standard. Henceforward the tendency to underline the articles of his creed, to draw attention to them by the use of notes of exclamation and by quotation marks, this doctrinaire purpose (subsidiary, to begin with), inclines more and more to get the upper hand. At last, in *The Kreutzer Sonata* and in *Resurrection*, the nudity of the sermon is but thinly veiled behind imaginative trappings; and the artist has become subservient to the preacher. By degrees, Tolstoy has ceased to look upon art as an end in itself. Now he can find pleasure in a "pretty lie" only in so far as it serves "truth": and when he talks of truth, he no longer means what he used to mean, a faithful presentation of the actual, a sincere portrayal of a sensual-psychical reality; he means that which, in the days of crisis, has revealed itself to him as higher, as spiritual, as religious truth. Henceforward, when he calls books "good," he is not referring to the most perfectly finished, carefully thought out, and broadly conceived pictures of men and things

that have been limned by writers of genius; he means those which (no matter whether good or bad, artistically speaking) tend to promote the "good cause," those which will help to make men more patient, gentler, more Christian, humaner, kindlier, and more social. That is why he regards the worthy but dull Bertold Auerbach as more important than the "mischievous" Shakespeare. More and more the measuring-rod tends to pass from the hands of Tolstoy the artist into those of Tolstoy the moralist, for whom art is merely an instrument for upbuilding a new religiosity, and not something endowed with a sublime mission of its own.

Art, impatient and jealous like other gods, takes vengeance on apostates. When asked to serve a purpose, when expected to endure subordination to some other deity proclaimed her superior, she impetuously refuses to help even those who have been her favourite disciples. Whenever Tolstoy, abandoning the purposelessness of art, becomes doctrinaire, his characters pale, and are no longer convincing. They wither in the cold, grey light of reason. The reader stumbles over logical prolixities, and wearily gropes his way to the exit. Though the second Tolstoy was wont to speak contemptuously of the writings of the first; to say, under stress of his recently won moral fanaticism, that *Childhood* and *War and Peace* were "bad, futile, useless books," because they provided no more than æsthetic enjoyment, which was (hearken, Apollo!) "enjoyment of a lower kind"—in actual fact, these are his masterpieces, compared with which the preachments of his old age are failures. The more Tolstoy surrenders to the "despotism of morality," the more he departs from the sensuous veracity which is the primal element of his genius to lose himself in a dialectical Cuckoo-Cloudland,

the more does he deteriorate as an artist. Like Antaeus, he derives his strength from contact with Mother Earth. Far on into old age, when, with those diamond-keen eyes of his, he is looking into the sensual world, he remains a writer of genius; but when he gets off the solid ground and soars into a metaphysical empyrean, his talents dwindle painfully. Deplorable in the extreme is it to see him making frantic efforts to wing his way through the realms of the spiritual, this artist foreordained to walk with heavy tread on the hard earth—to till it, to understand it, and to picture it more splendidly than any other writer of our days.

How tragical a discord, perpetually renewed in all works of art and in all ages! A mood of conviction, and a determination to impart that conviction to others, which ought to beautify the work of art, usually frustrate it by belittling the artist. True art is egotistical; it "seeketh but itself to please," and desires nothing in the world save its own perfectionment. The true artist must think only of his work, and must ignore mankind, for whom it is destined. Tolstoy, therefore, is supreme as artist when he is indifferent, dispassionate, unconcerned, incorruptible, neither confused nor led astray by sympathy; when, in this mood, he depicts the world disclosed to him by his senses. When he grows compassionate, when he wants his work to help people, to make them better, to guide them and to teach—then his art ceases to convince, and he himself is fated to become a more pitiful being than any of the creatures of his fancy.

SELF-PORTRAITURE

To know our life, means to know oneself.

TO RUSSANOFF, 1903

CONTEMPLATING the world with pitiless severity, he is no less severe in his contemplation of himself. His nature is one of those which cannot tolerate ambiguity. There must be nothing hazy, nothing obscure, either without or within. Thus, being accustomed as artist to study with precision every detail in his environment, from the shape of a tree to the twitching movements of a frightened dog, he cannot endure that he himself should be a confused medley of uncertain ingredients. It was inevitable, therefore, that from youth upwards his impulse to investigate should be turned upon himself as well as upon the outer world. "I want to know myself through and through," he writes in his diary when he is nineteen years old. Thenceforward until his death at the age of eighty-three, he is ever on the alert, critical and mistrustful, to study the morphology of his own soul. Ruthless towards himself as towards others, he traces the ramifications of every nerve of feeling, dissects every thought when it is still warm from the minting. Not content to feel acutely, he wishes to know himself acutely as well. Tolstoy, a fanatical devotee of truth, cannot fail to be an ardent autobiographer.

But self-portraiture can never, as can depiction of the outer world, be finished once and for all, to attain the finality of objective works of art. The forms of others,

imagined or observed, can be completed by the creator, in that he definitively incorporates them in his work. When the birth has taken place, the navel-string is cut, and the creature enters upon an independent existence, extruded as the new-born infant is extruded from the maternal circulation. By the act of creation, the artist has freed himself from the creature. The ego, on the other hand, can never be cut adrift by the act of representation, for it is perennially mutable, and therefore cannot be contemplated once for all. That is why masters of the art of self-portraiture go on depicting themselves again and again throughout life. Dürer, Rembrandt, Titian—they paint their earliest pictures as they sit before the mirror; and they are still contemplating their own image when the brush drops from the failing hand. A self-portrait is quickly submerged by the flux of time's waters, and these autospective artists want to record the metamorphoses in their physical being no less than the unchanging elements of their bodily form. In like manner Tolstoy, the arch-realist, can never finish the work of self-portraiture. Scarcely has he completed one portrait of himself, as Nehludoff or Besuhoff or Levin, than he finds the picture irrecognizable, and must start afresh to paint the new man he has become. The artist has grasped the shadow of the soul; the substance of the self has eluded him, has winged its way on new flights, in the endeavour to attain the unattainable—and once more Tolstoy, the indefatigable, sets out in pursuit. Thus it is that during sixty years of stupendous labour, he produces no work which does not contain a portrait of himself, nor one in which this portrait is adequate to his complexity. We must study them all, novels and tales and diaries and letters, if we are to get a veracious like-

ness. In the mass they give the most many-sided and most carefully elaborated, the most vigilant and continuous example of self-portraiture achieved by anyone in our own century.

For this man who has no powers of invention, who is competent only to recount the experienced and the perceived, can never exclude himself, the experiencer, the perceiver, from the field of vision. Being egocentric to a degree which arouses his own despair, he cannot forget himself even in moments of ecstasy, cannot transcend the restrictions of self-awareness even under the stress of passion. Not even where he is most in his element, in the free environment of nature, can he escape for a second to merge himself in his surroundings—much as he longs to cease being shadowed by the ego. "I love nature, when she is all around me" (note the "me" and the "I"), "but I must be in her. I love her when the balmy airs enwrap me, and then move onwards into the infinite; when the tender grass-stems, which I press to the ground as I recline on them, tint the broad pastures with their green." We see that for him the most entrancing landscape is no more than radius and circumference of the circle at whose centre the ego is fast fixed; and that, as far as he is concerned, the whole spiritual world revolves for ever around his bodily personality. This does not mean that he was vain in any base sense of the word; that, arrogantly overestimating his own importance, he considered Tolstoy to be the navel of the universe. Despite the intensity of his self-feeling, no one was ever more self-critical. But he was cabined within his own body, was prisoned by his own self-hood, was unable to ignore himself. Since he was wingless, there was withheld from him

that supreme gift of destiny—the ability to outsoar himself, in a dream, in a flight of fancy, in an illusion.

Incessantly, therefore, as if under compulsion, and always in opposition to his conscious will, by day and by night, to the verge of exhaustion and beyond, he had "to keep watch over" his own life, to study it and explain it. Never could his autobiographical frenzy abate, any more than his heart could stop pulsing in his breast, the stream of consciousness cease to flow through his brain; for him the art of the writer was summed up in the endeavour to hold assize upon himself and pass judgment. Consequently, there is no form of self-description which Tolstoy has not practised: simple narration, a purely mechanical record of memories; examination of conscience, moral appraisement, and confession; self-description as a means of self-control and self-incitation; autobiography as an æsthetic and religious exercise—the confusing multiplicity of these types of self-portraiture, some naked and others veiled, almost defies analysis. This much is certain, that just as Tolstoy was the most photographed man of modern days, so also is he more effectively autobiographed than any other. From his diary we know him as thoroughly when he is seventeen as when he is an octogenarian; we learn of his youthful passions, the tragedy of his marriage, his intimate thoughts. These are recorded with the same frankness and accuracy as are trivialities and foolish escapades. In this we see another contrast with Dostoeffsky, who lived "with closed lips," whereas Tolstoy liked to live "with doors and windows always open." Owing to his mania for self-revelation, we know every detail, every episode, of his long life as thoroughly as (from innumerable photographs and sketches) we know his physi-

cal aspect when shoemaking and when talking to the peasants, on horseback and at the ploughtail, at his desk and playing tennis, in the company of wife and friends and grandchildren, asleep and lying dead. Moreover, this vivid portrayal is countersigned by the numberless memoirs and sketches penned by those who came in contact with him; wife and daughter, secretaries, interviewers, and casual visitors. The woods of Yasnaya Polyana, turned into paper, would hardly supply enough for the printing of these memoirs of the lord of the manor. No other writer has ever, of set purpose, made his inner self so widely known to the world; rarely indeed has any been of so communicative a disposition. Since Goethe, no great figure in the world of letters has been pictured with such a wealth of detail by all the arts of subjective and objective description.

Tolstoy's urge to self-observation begins with the dawn of consciousness. It appears in the rosy-skinned infant, making busy but awkward investigatory movements before it has learned to speak; and ends only on the death-bed of the old man of eighty-two, when the failing lips can give vent to nothing more than unmeaning breath. Between the silence that came before the beginning and the silence that followed the end, there was not a moment without speech or writing. At nineteen when he had just left school, Tolstoy bought a diary. On the opening pages we read: "I have never kept a diary before, not seeing the use of it; but now, when I am engaged in developing my faculties, a diary will help me to follow the course of their development; it will contain rules for my life, and in it my future activities must be foreshadowed." Thus in the beardless youth we can already discern the Tolstoy of later days; the world-teacher;

the man who regarded life from beginning to end as a "serious matter," which must be lived accordingly. Like an accountant, he starts by drawing up a balance-sheet, showing debits and credits, promise and performance. This young man is fully aware that his personality is a good asset. He records the fact that he is an "exceptional man," upon whom is imposed an "exceptional task." At the same time, he is under no illusions as to the amount of voluntary energy he will need in order to coerce into moral activities a nature inclined to sloth, to extravagant outbursts, to fits of impatience, and to sensuality. With a sure instinct, this precocious psychologist recognizes his chief dangers, which are typically Russian: those of excess, thriftlessness, waste of time, lack of discipline. He therefore devises an apparatus for the control of his daily doings, so that there may be no void spaces of time. His diary is, first and foremost, to be a stimulus; it must continually help him in the work of self-instruction, and must enable him to read his own heart. Again and again, in these communings, we are reminded of Tolstoy's determination "to keep watch over his own life." Thus unsparingly does the lad summarize the record of one of his days: "From 12 till 2 with Bigitsheff; spoke too openly, vain, self-deceptive. From 2 till 4, gymnastics; little tenacity and patience. From 4 till 6, ate dinner, and made some needless purchases. Did not write home, laziness; could not make up my mind whether I should drive to Volkonsky; said very little there, cowardice. Have behaved badly; cowardice, vanity, heedlessness, weakness, laziness." Thus early and thus ruthlessly does the young man grip himself by the throat, and the grip is not relaxed for the sixty years and more that remain to him of life. At eighty-two, as at nineteen,

Tolstoy has the kourbash ever ready to lacerate his own hide. The diary he keeps in old age still tells us abusively that he had been "cowardly, bad, indolent" when the tired body has failed in discipline, has not succeeded in responding adequately to the Spartan demands of the will. From the beginning to the end, Tolstoy posts sentries in front of his life. Like a Prussian drill-sergeant, a choleric martinet, he endeavours with shouts, menaces, and blows to scare away tendencies toward self-indulgence and to quicken his advance towards the goal.

The artist in Tolstoy was hardly less precocious than the moralist, and was in like manner introspective. At twenty-three he began (and there is no second instance in world literature) a three-volume autobiography. The first thing Tolstoy contemplates as artist is his own image in the mirror. A very young man, knowing little of the world, he is thrown back for materials into the tiny realm of his own experiences, the memories of his still recent years of callowness. With the naïveté of Dürer, who at twelve snatches up the silver-point to sketch his girlish face, still unfurrowed by time, upon the first piece of paper that comes to his hand, Artillery Lieutenant Tolstoy, with the down new-grown on cheeks and chin, fired by the lust of pencraft, sits down in a fortress in the Caucasus to tell of his "Childhood," his "Boyhood," and his "Adolescence." No question as to for whom he may be writing seems to have entered his mind; and still less is he concerned about being printed in a periodical or a book, about publicity of any sort. He acts instinctively, prompted by an urge towards self-enlightenment by self-description. The prompting is blind, is not clarified by any conscious aim; nor is it illuminated by what he will in later years insist upon as the justification for art, "the light of a moral

demand." The young officer's action is purely impulsive. Curious as to the possibilities of life, and more than a little bored by the life he is actually leading, he devotes himself, in the spirit of an amateur, to the task of sketching his home and his childhood. He knows nothing as yet of the revivalist spirit which will overpower him in later years; he does not speak of "confessing his sins," of a conversion "to the good"; he does not aspire to depict the "abominations of his youth" as a warning to others. Not wishing to "do good" to anyone, he is moved solely by the sportiveness of a youth who is still half boy, the sum of whose experiences concerns the way in which he "has glided on out of being a little child" into being a young man. In this mood he describes his first impressions, his father, his mother, and his other relatives, his tutor, human beings in general, animals, the world of nature; and he is successful, thanks to the splendid frankness which none but the purposeless can know. How different is this carefree narration from the serious and analytic soundings of Leo Tolstoy when he has become an author animated with a conscious intention, one who feels it incumbent upon him to show himself to the world as a penitent, to artists as an artist, to God as a sinner, and to himself as a model of humility. The youthful autobiographer is nothing more than a young man of birth and breeding who has no taste for spending the whole of his evenings at the card-table, and who (feeling a trifle homesick in this remote and unfamiliar place) wishes to warm his heart by contemplating in imagination those whom he cannot now see in the flesh.

When the unexpected happens, when this artless and purposeless autobiography brings him fame, Leo Tolstoy does not write the anticipated sequel, "Manhood"; the well-known author cannot recapture the tone of the un-

known scribbler. Not even at the climax of his powers does the master craftsman succeed in limning another self-portrait so expressive as the first. For insofar as an artist gains recognition, he loses something that is irrecoverable, the ingenuousness of self-communing on the part of one who has no thought of being watched and overheard, and has no ulterior aim; he forfeits a childlike candour which is possible only in the darkness of anonymity. In every writer except those who are hopelessly corrupted by literary success, there begins when success comes an intensification of spiritual bashfulness. The elements in his nature that demand privacy must hide behind a mask, lest a pose of theatricality or an assumption of falseness should distort the sincerity which can exist unmasked and unalloyed in those alone to whom fame, with its buzz of the world's curiosity, has never come. Therefore in the case of Tolstoy (whose life-history has the breadth of a Russian landscape) half a century must elapse before the artist systematically devotes himself to self-portraiture in pursuance of the scheme debonairly initiated in youth. Now, thanks to his religious bent since the crisis, the aim is a new one. Autobiography has acquired a moral, a pedagogic purpose. He does not write in order that he may learn to know himself; he wants his self-portraiture to instruct and convert the world. "Every man can gain a great deal for himself by writing as faithful a description as possible to his own life, and he cannot fail thereby to do much good to his fellows." In these weighty terms does he herald his undertaking, and the octogenarian makes elaborate preparations for what is to be the justification of his latter-day outlooks. But hardly has he begun the memorial than he desists from it, though he tells us that he still considers "such a perfectly faithful autobiography more use-

ful . . . than the artistic chatter which fills the twelve volumes of my works, to which my contemporaries ascribe a quite unmerited importance."

His standard of sincerity has grown with increasing knowledge of his own existence. He has come to recognize that truth is mutable, can be variously interpreted, and is of abysmal depth. Thus, whereas the young man of twenty-three skied swiftly and unconcernedly across the smooth surface of the snow, the old man, deliberately questing for truth and equipped with an anxious sense of responsibility, hesitates and shrinks back in alarm. He is troubled by "the inadequacies and the unfairnesses which inevitably creep into an autobiography"; is afraid lest "such an autobiography, even if it were not directly falsified, might become equivalent to a lie owing to the display of false lights, owing to a deliberate thrusting of good points to the front while keeping bad points in the background." He frankly admits: "Furthermore, when I had made up my mind to describe the naked truth, and not to gloss over any of the badness of my life, I grew alarmed at the thought of the effect which such an autobiography could not fail to have." Tolstoy the moralist, the man who is concerned with the effect of his actions upon others, grows more and more convinced that there is no safe and upright course to be steered "between the Charybdis of selfishness and the Scylla of excessive frankness." Having planned to write an account of his own life which should reveal "all its baseness and shamefulness," which was to be an autobiography penned "from the standpoint of good and evil," he realizes that the plainspeaking would be too dangerous, and renounces the undertaking precisely because he has so much veneration for absolute sincerity. We need not greatly deplore the

loss, for the writings of this period (*My Confession*, for instance) show that from the time of the religious crisis onwards Tolstoy's craving for sincerity took the form of longing for self-abasement, a flagellant's lust for self-castigation, so that what he regarded as "frankness" concerning his own thoughts and actions had become tantamount to a persistent vilification of himself. The Tolstoy of the closing years did not want to describe himself to men, but to humiliate himself before men, wanted to tell them things which he was ashamed to admit even to himself. We are therefore entitled to assume that this definitive autobiography, with its trumpeting of alleged baseness and its pillorying of reputed sins, would have been a caricature.

Besides, what need have we of formal autobiography when, as already said, Tolstoy (like Goethe) writes the fullest and most truthful of autobiographies in the complex of his works? The novels and the tales contain perfectly recognizable portraits of their author in every phase of his career. His double stalks through the pages. In *The Cossacks*, Lieutenant Olenin, who runs away from melancholy and idleness in Moscow to seek refuge in his profession and in the arms of nature, is, down to every thread of his attire and every line of his face, Artillery Captain Tolstoy. Look at the meditative and dejected Count Besuhoff in *War and Peace*, and at Squire Levin, the seeker after God, the man greatly troubled about the meaning of existence, in *Anna Karenina;* in both you have Tolstoy shortly before the crisis, drawn to the life. Who can fail to see, hidden under the cowl of Father Sergius, the famous author's own struggle for holiness? What reader of *Devil* can fail to perceive in that work a study of the ageing Tolstoy's resistance to the promptings of the

flesh? Prince Nehludoff, the most remarkable of all the creatures of his fancy, stalking symbolically through many books, is the ideal Tolstoy, the author as he would fain be, the mirror of his conscience, the man to whom he ascribes his own intentions, and upon whose shoulders he unloads the burden of his own moral deeds. Saryntseff, in *And the Light Shineth in the Darkness*, wears so thin a mask, and the drama is so full of the atmosphere of Tolstoy's domestic tragedy, that every actor who plays the title-role makes himself up as an impersonation of the author. A nature so comprehensive as Tolstoy's had perforce to be distributed among a number of fictional personalities. We have to piece it together again, to assemble it out of the parts scattered in many books; when we have done so, the writer's entity is unmistakable. That is why anyone who reads Tolstoy's novels and tales, anyone who does this while keeping his wits about him, can dispense with biographical details. No outside observer could give us so clear a picture as we get in Tolstoy's self-observations. He reveals the most perilous of his conflicts, discloses the most hidden of his feelings. Tolstoy's prose, like Goethe's verse, is a general confession, in which picture supplements picture, unceasingly, throughout a long life.

This continuity it is, and nothing else, that raises Tolstoy's writings as a whole into the highest rank of self-portraiture, and makes them supreme in this respect as far as prose works are concerned. Casanova writes memoirs once and for all; Stendhal is fragmentary; but Tolstoy, inseparable as a shadow, glides at the heels of the figures in his books for the whole of his literary career. Of course every artist uses the same method at times; every artist is familiar with the urge to incorporate himself among the creatures of his fancy. The poiete, the being who is

burdened with more destinies than his own, the being whom every experience fertilizes and makes heavy with child, hands on to the children he bears both the ecstasies that thrill him and the crises that transform him. But whereas most writers do this once only, presenting themselves to the public in one impersonation (Stendhal as Fabrice, Gottfried Keller in *Der grüne Heinrich*, Joyce as Stephen Dedalus), Tolstoy shows himself to us each decade in a new form. We do not know him in a fixed and final presentation. We know him as child and boy, as light-hearted lieutenant, as happy bridegroom, as the Saul and Paul of the days of crisis, as warrior and half-saint, as old man who has attained clarity of vision and tranquillity of mind; always varying, and yet ever the same; a cinematographic portrait in a continuous flux, instead of a rigid and immutable photograph.

In addition to the pictorial series, we have, as a magnificent supplement, the author's conceptual self-supervision in the form of diaries and letters, continued day by day and hour by hour till death claims him. The result is that there is scarcely an unexplored region in the vast extent of his existence. His social experiences, his private life, his epic and other literary activities, his wrestlings with physical and metaphysical problems—all are exhaustively discussed. And because Tolstoy, despite his extraordinariness, despite his seemingly superhuman qualities, was (like Goethe) thoroughly normal, healthy, well-balanced, anything but pathological; because he was a perfect specimen of human kind, a model of mental and bodily equilibrium; because he was an archetypal and universal figure—we feel of him (once more, just as we feel of Goethe) that the existence he has recorded for us so faithfully is an epitome of human life.

CRISIS AND TRANSFORMATION

The most important incident in a man's life is the moment when he becomes aware of his ego. The consequences of this incident may be most beneficial or most terrible.

NOVEMBER, 1898

To creative activity, every danger becomes a boon, every hindrance a help and an advantage, for it generates and regenerates unknown forces. If a life is to have an effect upon the world, it must not stand still, for mental creative force, no less than bodily, springs from variety and transformation; there can be nothing more dangerous to an imaginative writer than contentment, mechanical labour, and a smooth course. Once only in his career did Tolstoy pass through such a phase of self-forgetting relaxation—so happy for the man, so perilous for the artist. Once only, on its pilgrimage, does his restless spirit allow itself a period of repose. For sixteen years out of his two-and-eighty, from the time of his wedding until he has finished the novels *War and Peace* and *Anna Karenina*, Tolstoy is content with himself and his work. For thirteen years, from 1865 to 1878, even the diary, the warder of his conscience, is dumb. Tolstoy, happily immersed in the task of composition, is no longer watching himself, and is satisfied with watching the world. He does not ask why he is engaged in creative activity, why he procreates seven children and produces the two greatest

of his books. During this peaceful interlude, and then only, he lives free from care like any other man, enjoying the respectable egoism of family life, delighted at being freed from the torment of questioning. "I no longer brood over my position (brooding is done with), and I do not burrow into my own sentiments; in my relations with my family, it is enough for me to feel, and I do not reflect. Hence I have an unwonted amount of spiritual freedom." The stream of creative thought is no longer checked by introspection. The inexorable sentry who watches over his moral ego has gone to sleep for awhile, so that the artist has freedom of movement, unrestricted play for his senses.

During these years, he becomes famous; his worldly wealth is quadrupled; he educates his children and enlarges his house. But lasting content with an existence of this kind is impossible to a man of Tolstoy's temperament. Fame cannot satisfy him, and he cannot bask in the sunshine of wealth. From the work of objective creation, he must in the end turn back to his task of self-perfectionment; and since no god summons him to a life of affliction, he sets out in search of it himself. Since no tragical fate is imposed on him from without, he will fashion it for himself from within. Life must be ever on the wing; above all, so mighty a life as his. If the outward sources of destiny cease to flow, new springs gush forth within the spirit, that the circulation of existence may be maintained. That which happened to Tolstoy when he was verging on fifty, that which seemed inexplicable to many of his contemporaries, namely his sudden turning away from art and towards religion, must not be regarded as abnormal. There are no abnormalities in the development of this healthy being. The only unusual thing about

the process is its intensity, characteristic of Tolstoy. The transformation which took place in him during the fiftieth year of his life was one which happens to us all, though in most persons it may escape notice. What happened was nothing more than the inevitable adaptation of the bodily organism to the approach of old age, the climacteric change which occurs in artists just as in other men.

"Life stood still and grew sinister"—it is thus that he formulates the beginning of the crisis. At fifty he has reached the "dead point" where the formative capacity of the plasma begins to decline, and the soul tends to grow rigid. No longer can the senses knead the clay with the old creative energy; at the time when the hair is turning grey, impressions from the outer world begin to lose their vivid tints. Now opens that second epoch, which we can study also in the self-revelations of Goethe; the epoch when the play of the senses yields place to conceptual activities, when object becomes phenomenon, when the image grows into a symbol, when the longing to create a world full of light and colour becomes transformed into a longing to effect a crystal-clear classification of thoughts. This re-birth transforms the mind, and likewise brings about a measure of bodily discomfort, arousing an uneasy sense that a stranger, perhaps an enemy, is appoaching. A chill feeling of anxiety, a terrible dread of impoverishment, takes possession of the disquieted soul; and thereupon the body, like a sensitive seismograph, records the tremors which show that an earthquake is at hand. Meanwhile (and here we enter a region which is still imperfectly explored), what time the soul is as yet unable to foresee the precise nature of this attack out of the darkness and can only shiver at the premonition of danger, the organism has already begun spontaneously to arm in self-

defence, and in the psycho-physical domain nature has begun to take her precautions without any knowledge of the matter on the part of the person most concerned and without any exertion of his conscious will. Just as in the lower animals, before the winter cold begins, the body protects itself by a thickening of the fur, so does the human spirit, at the first approach of old age and when the zenith of life has been barely past, provide itself with a new protective covering against the chill epoch of decline. This profound change, proceeding from the bodily into the spiritual, originating perhaps in the cells of the glands but making its influence felt in the remotest vibrations of creative production, this climacteric epoch which I may term the age of antipuberty, manifests itself like the age of puberty (equally determined by changes in the blood, and equally assuming the aspect of a crisis) in the form of a mental and spiritual disturbance. In this field there is much work still to be done by physiologists, psychologists, and psycho-analysts; for neither the underlying bodily changes nor the resulting mental transformations have as yet been adequately studied. In the case of women, indeed, seeing that in them the changes in question are more obvious and palpable, we are somewhat better informed; but as regards men we still grope in the dark. This much is certain, that the climacteric of the male is almost invariably the period of great conversions, of religious and poetic and rational sublimations, which are derivatives for the sense that the animal being is less richly blooded than of yore; they are a substitute for reduced bodily sensuality, an intensification of world-feeling at the cost of self-feeling, a substitute for the lowered intensity in life's potential. The complement of puberty (no less dangerous in the weakly, no less vehement in the vehe-

ment, no less productive in the productive), this climacteric in the male inaugurates a new type of creative work.

In the life-history of every noted artist, we discover this critical phase; but in no other does it show itself with such earthquaking, volcanic, and almost annihilating impetuosity as in Tolstoy. No one else has disclosed so plainly as this man of energetic and normal temperament Everyman's universal dread at the restriction of life's possibilities, universal horror at the impending abatement in creative faculty. For the very reason that his senses have been so vigorous, and that thanks to this he has been able to create so abundantly, he feels the first threat of a decline in their powers as the imminence of doom, as the menace of annihilation. If we look at the matter objectively, realistically, we see that what happens to Tolstoy in his fiftieth year is nothing more than what is proper to his age. He feels that he is getting older. He loses some of his teeth; his memory is not so trustworthy as it used to be; his thoughts are less brilliantly clear. Every man of fifty is familiar with these symptoms. But Tolstoy, whose virility has been so exceptional, whose physical and mental energies have been so exuberant, is more than common alarmed by the first touch of autumn, feels withered, and ripe for death. He says: "How can one go on living when one is no longer intoxicated with life?" Neurasthenic depression and a sense of utter weakness assail him, so that he is ready to lay down his arms and capitulate at the first assault. He can neither write nor think. "Mentally speaking, I have gone to sleep and cannot wake up; I feel out of sorts, and am in low spirits." Till he can finish *Anna Karenina*, he must drag it after him like a chain, and he now finds the book "tedious and commonplace." His hair turns grey, his brow is furrowed, his digestion will

not work properly, and his limbs are feeble. Brooding, he says: "I can no longer take delight in anything; I have nothing more to expect from life; I shall soon be dead. . . . With all my energy, I turn away from life." Just after this, his diary speaks of the "fear of death." A few days later, he writes: "Il faudra mourir seul." I have already shown how to this man of outstanding vitality, death is the most gruesome of all spectres. That is why he crumples up so pitifully when he detects a few weak spots in his armour.

Nevertheless, the man of genius who is thus diagnosing his own illness is not wholly wrong when, snuffing the air, he scents carrion. Part of the original Tolstoy perishes once for all in this crisis. Not the man in full vigour; but the free-spirited and unreflecting artist, who took the world as he found it, and regarded it as part of himself, as a huge extension of his own body. Hitherto Tolstoy had never questioned the universe as to its significance. He had contemplated it as an artist looks at his model, and had watched phenomena with the delight of a child. Whenever he had wished to describe them, they had yielded themselves to his will, had allowed him to caress them, to take them into his creative hands. Now, when mistrust has arisen in his mind, this objective contemplation and unquestioning record of life has become impossible. The communion between subjective and objective has been broken. An abyss has yawned between the world and the ego. Things no longer come to him confidently, no longer give themselves to him unreservedly. He feels that they are hiding something from him; that a shadow, a question, a gloomy and unnamable peril, lurks in the background. For the first time, this man of lucid vision feels that existence is a mystery; has inklings of a mean-

ing which cannot be grasped by the senses. He becomes aware that, for the perception of what is hidden in the background, he needs a new instrument, an eye that is conscious, a thinker's eye. The items in his environment have put on unfamiliar hues; indeed, there are no longer any items, there is nothing that exists apart. Everything has an enigmatic relation to a community that eludes him. In every phenomenon he is now constrained to seek for a moral purport, and even the things that are most remote have to be considered as interwoven with his own destiny.

A few examples will help throw light upon this inward transformation.—In his campaigning days, Tolstoy had seen hundreds of men killed, and had never questioned the right or the wrong of the matter. In his books, he had described their deaths with an artist's objectivity, or with the impassivity of a scientific observer who records the images cast on his retina. Now, on a visit to France, he sees an execution by guillotine, and thereupon his whole nature rises in revolt against mankind.—As barin, as lord of the manor, Count Tolstoy had ridden a thousand times past the peasants on his estate, and, while the hoofs of his galloping horse bespatter them with mud or powder them with dust, he has taken their servile greetings as a matter of course. Now, of a sudden, he begins to notice that they go barefoot, are poverty-stricken, timid, cut off from human rights; and he questions his own right to ignore their misery and their ceaseless toil.—Times without number, driving in a sleigh through the streets of Moscow, he has sped past rows of shivering beggars without even turning his head to look at them. Poverty, wretchedness, oppression, soldiering, prisons, Siberia, have been to him facts as natural as that snow should fall in winter and that rivers should flow seaward.

Now, when a census is being taken, the newly awakened man realizes that the deplorable situation of the proletariat is an accusation levelled against his own superfluity in this world's goods.

Since he can no longer regard mankind as material "for study and observation"; since his fellowmen have become brothers whose existence imposes duties on him; since the louring figure of death has warned him of his own mortality—the life of quiet contemplation has been shattered. He can no longer look upon existence as a mere spectacle, but must persistently inquire as to the meaning and counter-meaning, the rights and the wrongs, of everything that happens. He cannot envisage humanity from an egocentric, an introverted standpoint, but must regard things socially, in a brotherly spirit, as an extravert. Awareness of his kinship with everyone and everything has "seized" him like an illness. "One must not think," he groans; "it is too painful." Now that the eyes of conscience are open, the sorrows of mankind, the primal misery of the world, will henceforward be his most intimate concern. Out of his horror of the Nothing, there emerges a new and eerie creative attitude towards the All. The spirit of complete surrender urges on the artist to the task of building his world anew, as a moral edifice this time. Saved from death's menace, he now enjoys the miracle of rebirth; and there comes into being that Tolstoy whom the world honours as artist and as the most human of men.

To begin with, in that agonizing hour of collapse, in that uncertain moment before the "awakening" (as Tolstoy subsequently, when he had found consolation, terms this period of disquietude), the man who has been thus taken by surprise does not foresee that a healing trans-

formation is nigh. Before he has been granted the new kind of vision, before the eye of conscience has opened, he feels blind, environed by chaos and the darkness of night. His world has broken up, and, paralysed with terror, he stares into the unmeaning gloom. "Wherefore live, seeing that life is so horrible?" he asks, in the undying question of Ecclesiastes. Why trouble to plough, when death reaps the harvest? Despairingly, in this crypt-like world, he gropes his way along the walls, endeavouring to find an outlet, to see a ray of light, a sparkle from the star of hope. When at length he realizes that no one outside is going to extend a helping hand or to throw a gleam of light on a way of escape, he sets to work systematically, that he may mine a passage, foot by foot. In 1879 he writes the following "unknown questions" on a sheet of paper:

(a) Wherefore live?
(b) What is the cause of my existence and of everyone else's?
(c) What is the purpose of my existence and of everyone else's?
(d) What is the meaning of the cleavage into good and evil which I feel within myself, and why does it exist?
(e) How ought I to live?
(f) What is death—how can I save myself?

"How can I save myself? How ought I to live?" A cry of anguish, a cry from the depths of the heart, a cry which Tolstoy will continue to send forth until his lips are closed by death. He no longer believes the glad tidings brought to him by his senses; art gives no solace, the heedlessness of earlier years has vanished; the intoxication of youth has been succeeded by a cruel sobriety; from

all sides coldness radiates out of the abyss of mortality, out of the invisible realm of death which surrounds life. How can I save myself? More insistent and more poignant grows the cry. How can he believe that what appears to be unmeaning is really so—though the meaning he is in search of will not be one he can touch with the fingers, see with the eyes, know with the intellect, but will be a meaning that dwells beyond and above truth? For the intellect suffices only to give knowledge of life, and cannot give knowledge of death. The man who had been a nihilist has come to feel that a new kind of power is requisite for the comprehension of the incomprehensible. Since this unbeliever cannot find this power in himself—overcome by terror, overwhelmed by anxiety, he humbly kneels before God, contemptuously casts aside the worldly knowledge which has filled him with rejoicing for fifty years, and impetuously prays for faith: "Give me faith, Lord, and let me help others to find it."

THE ARTIFICIAL CHRISTIAN

> *Ah me, how hard it is to live only in God's sight—to live as men have lived when lowered into a shaft, knowing that they would never get out of it, and that no one would ever learn how they had lived there. But one must, one must live like that, for only such a life is a life. Help me, Lord.*
>
> DIARY, NOVEMBER, 1900

"GRANT me faith, Lord," cries Tolstoy despairingly to the God he has hitherto denied. This God, it would seem, does not show indulgence towards those who seek him impetuously, instead of waiting humbly until his will is revealed to them. For Tolstoy brings impatience, his besetting sin, into the field of religion. He is not content to ask for faith. He must have it instantly, all complete, hafted like an axe, so that he can use it to clear away the thicket of his doubts. This nobleman is accustomed to servants who jump to obey his nod; he has been spoiled, too, by those keen senses of his, which have been wont in the twinkling of an eye to convey to him all the knowledge of the world. He is a passionate, capricious, self-willed man; such persons can never wait patiently. He will not be satisfied to wait, like a devout monk, abiding the time when the light will begin to shed its ray on him from above. He wants the full glare of day to shine instantly into his tenebrous soul. With one leap, his mettlesome spirit, unhindered by obstacles, is to press forward

to the "meaning of life," is to "know God," to "think God," as he expresses it almost arrogantly. Faith, the imitation of Christ, humility, absorption into the essence of God—these things he expects to learn as easily and swiftly as, though his hair is grey, he now learns Greek and Hebrew. He is to become an accomplished pedagogue, theologian, sociologist within six months, or at any rate within a year.

But how can he who does not already bear within himself the seeds of faith discover faith thus suddenly? How can a man betwixt night and morning become sympathetic, kindly, humble, gentle as a good Franciscan, when for fifty years he has appraised the world with the aloofness of a man of science, when he is a nihilist of the Russian type, when to him the most important thing has ever been himself? How can a will of adamant be transformed in a hand's turn into an accommodating love of mankind? Where can such a self-centred person learn the faith that will enable him to lose himself, and to undergo absorption into a higher, a superhuman power? "Surely," says Tolstoy, to himself, "from those who already have such a faith, or say they have, from Mother Church, who for two thousand years has worn Christ's signet!"

Instantly (for he will not brook a moment's delay), Leo Tolstoy drops on his knees before the ikons; he fasts, makes pilgrimage to monasteries, argues with popes and -bishops, and flutters the pages of the gospels. For three years, he tries to be orthodox; but the incense-laden air of the churches strikes chill into a soul that is already shivering with cold. Soon, disillusioned once for all with orthodoxy, he shuts the doors behind him. The Church, he finds, is not in possession of the true faith; nay, rather, the Church has allowed the waters of life to

dry up or run away; in the Church, the teachings of religion have been falsified.

He seeks elsewhere. Perhaps the philosophers will know more about this mysterious "meaning of life." At once, with berserker rage, Tolstoy, whose thoughts have never before been concerned with suprasensual matters, begins to read helter-skelter the writings of the philosophers of all ages, gulping down their words far too rapidly to digest their meaning. He begins with Schopenhauer, ever the chosen companion of those whose minds have been overcast with gloom; goes back to Socrates and Plato; gives Mohammed a turn; tries Confucius and Lao-tse; studies the mystics, the stoics, the sceptics; reads Nietzsche. He closes their books. They, too, have no other means of studying the universe than the one he has himself been using all these years, the keen, laboriously contemplative understanding; they, too, are questioners rather than knowers; they, too, are striving towards God, and have not yet found rest in God. They create systems for the mind, but do not bring peace to a troubled soul; they bestow knowledge, but do not give solace.

Then, like a sick man who can get no help from the accredited practitioners, and therefore gives the herbalists and the village wiseacres a trial, Tolstoy, who has the best intelligence of all the Russians of his day, turns in the sixth decade of his life to the peasants, to the "folk," that from them, the unlearned, he may learn the true faith, may draw wisdom from the sources of unwisdom. They, the unlearned, who have never been confused or corrupted by the written word; they, the poor and afflicted, who toil uncomplainingly, and who, when their hour comes, slink into a corner to die like dumb beasts; they, who do not doubt because they do not think, because they

are endowed with sancta simplicitas—they must have a secret which enables them without a murmur to bow their necks beneath the iron yoke of poverty. They, in their stupidity, must know something which is hidden from the keen intelligence of the wise, something thanks to which, though backward in matters of reason, they are leaders in the world of the soul. "The way we live is wrong, and the way they live is right." That is why God shines visibly out of their patient existence, while those who have nothing better than a "vain, voluptuous greed for knowledge" have turned away from the true source of light, which is in the heart. Had they not a solace of their own, had they not a magical amulet, they could not so cheerfully, so light-heartedly endure an existence as pitiful as theirs. Thinking these thoughts, the impatient and unruly man lusts to discover this arcanum of the simple. From them, from them alone, from "God's own people," Tolstoy is now convinced that he will learn the secret of how to live "rightly," will learn the art of patient self-surrender to a harsh life and a still harsher death.

Let him enter into communion with them, get into close touch with their life, that he may pluck the divine mystery from them! Off with the gentleman's coat and on with the peasant's smock; away from the table that is laden with costly viands and useless books. Henceforward he will nourish himself on innocent herbs and bland milk, and will learn humility, the wisdom of the simple. In this spirit he now sets to work, Leo Nikolaevich Tolstoy, lord of Yasnaya Polyana and other manors, the author whose writings have made him lord of millions of readers. He drives the plough; shoulders the cask in which water is carried from the well; toils indefatigably in the harvest-field side by side with his own peasants. The hand which

wrote *Anna Karenina* and *War and Peace* now devotes itself to cutting out and stitching shoes, to the handling of duster and broom, to the making of garments. Swiftly, swiftly, let him get into close contact with his "brothers." Leo Tolstoy hopes to become one of the "folk," and thus to make himself a true Christian. He goes into the village, to foregather there with those who are still little more than serfs, and who still, when he draws near, pull off their caps from force of habit. He summons them to his house, where, in their heavy boots, they stump awkwardly and timidly across the polished floor, and draw a breath of relief when they find that the barin, "His Worship," has no complaint to make of them, and does not, as they had feared, propose to raise their rents. How strange, he wants to talk to them about God, always about God! They scratch their heads, perplexed. The good fellows remember that the count had had a fad of this kind once before. For a whole year, until he wearied of it, he had taught the youngsters in the school. What can he be up to now? They listen to him suspiciously, for in truth this nihilist disguised as a peasant can hardly fail to seem a government spy to these members of the "folk" when he is trying to learn the secret of their humility, to discover the key of their faith, to learn from them what he must learn if he is to be successful in the campaign leading to God.

But the revelations of the peasants are of use only to art and to the artist. The best of Tolstoy's writings are embellished with the results of these rural conversations, and henceforward his phrasing is vivified and strengthened by peasant metaphors. The wisdom of the simple is not to be learned. When *Anna Karenina* was published, Dostoeffsky clairvoyantly said concerning Levin, the

impersonation of Tolstoy in that novel: "Such men as Levin may live with the folk as long as they please, but they can never become part of the folk. No powers of determination, of will, or of imagination will enable a man to accomplish his object in going down among the people." The brilliant visionary hits the bull's-eye, pierces to the core of the Tolstoyan metamorphosis, discloses the true nature of the artificial Christianity of a man who, in desperation and not from love, in bitter spiritual need and not from spontaneous brotherliness, has gone down among the people. Tolstoy the intellectual may put on peasant attire and may do his utmost to assume the dull mentality of a peasant, but he will never be able to rid himself of the wide experience which has given him his specific outlook on the universe, will never be able to animate his body with a peasant's soul, will never reduce the mentality of one who has been searching for truth decade after decade to the simpler mentality, to the implicit faith, of a genuine son of the soil.

It does not suffice to throw oneself into a cell, like Verlaine, and to pray: "Mon Dieu, donne-moi de la simplicité." This alone will not make humility ripen in the heart. Faith must be something lived and experienced; one cannot merely "profess" it. Neither a union with the common people by the bonds of sympathy, nor yet the appeasement of conscience by a genuine religious sentiment, can be made to irradiate the soul by some such simple process as turning an electric switch. Wearing a peasant smock, drinking kvass, mowing crops—these outward forms of equalization with the tillers of the soil can easily be adopted, without a moment's delay. But a Boeotian dullness of mind cannot be assumed at will; the intelligence cannot be lowered as one lowers a gas-flame.

Luminosity and alertness of mind are inalienable treasures; they dominate the will, and cannot be dominated thereby; and they assert themselves all the more vigorously when they feel that their sovereignty is threatened. Just as little as any spiritualistic legerdemain can equip us with knowledge transcending the inborn possibilities of experience, just so little can the intellect take a step back towards simplicity at the prompting of a sudden decision.

It was impossible that Tolstoy, a man of keen and far-reaching intelligence, should not speedily recognize that a damping down of his spiritual complexity to become complacent simplicity was beyond the powers even of such a will as his. In later years he said: "The attempt to constrain the spirit is like the attempt to catch a sunbeam; shut it up as tight as you please, it will always find its way out." In the long run he could not fail to be aware that his stubborn, contentious, overbearing intelligence made enduring humility impossible to him. Nor did the peasants ever really accept him as one of themselves, though he wore their dress and adopted their habits. As for the world at large, it merely considered him to be dressing up, and did not believe that there could be a genuine transformation of his mind. His closest associates, his wife, his children, the other members of his household, and his real friends (not the professional Tolstoyans), contemplated with uneasiness this attempt on his part to force himself into an environment that was unnatural to him. Turgenieff, writing on his deathbed, appealed to the "greatest of Russian writers" to return to the world of art. Countess Tolstoy, the victim of her husband's spiritual struggles, remarked to him at this time: "You used to say you were uneasy because you had no faith. Why, then, are you not happy now, when you say you have found

it?" The argument was simple and unanswerable. There is nothing to show that Tolstoy, after his conversion to the folk-God, had thereby attained peace of mind, the power to rest in the bosom of his newly found deity. On the contrary, whenever he speaks of his new doctrine, we cannot but feel that he is trying to hide the unsteadiness of his faith by vociferating that naught can shake his conviction. During the days that followed the conversion, all Tolstoy's sayings and doings had a disagreeable stridency. There was something ostentatious, forced, cantankerous, bigoted about them. His Christianity brayed like a trumpet, his humility strutted like a peacock. Anyone with a fine ear could detect in the exaggerations of his abasement the old note of Tolstoyan arrogance, could discern the pride which had assumed the mask of humility. Read the famous passage in his confession where he is endeavouring to "prove" his conversion by vilifying his life of earlier days: "I killed men in war, I fought duels, I squandered at the gaming table the money extorted from the peasants and I oppressed them cruelly, I went awhoring, after light women, and betrayed men. Lying, theft, adultery, all kinds of drunkenness and bestiality, every possible infamy, did I commit; there is no crime which cannot be laid to my charge." Lest any should excuse his offences on the ground that he is an artist, he goes on to say: "During these days I began to scribble, moved thereto by vanity, greed, and arrogance. In pursuit of fame and wealth, I repressed the good in my nature, and wallowed in sin."

A terrible confession, this; heart-rending in its moral pathos! Nevertheless, to speak frankly, has anyone ever really despised Leo Tolstoy because, in war time, he discharged his duties as artillery officer; because, being a

man of strong passions, he lived in his bachelor days the life led by other young men of his class; did anyone else ever look upon him as he looked upon himself, "a vile and sinful person," as a "louse"? Have we not a feeling that he protests too much? Can we fail to surmise that one expressing such excessive penitence, such arrogant humility, is inventing sins? Are we not forced to suspect that a soul yearning to bear testimony is assuming the burden of non-existent crimes as a way of "taking up the cross"? Are we not forced to suspect that in this way Tolstoy is trying to "prove" his Christian humility? Does not the urgent desire for such proof, so convulsive a parade of self-vilification, imply that there is no real humility, assured and equable, in this tortured soul? Do we not actually sense the existence of a dangerously perverted vanity? As soon as the first uncertain spark of faith begins to glow within him, the impatient convert is eager to set the whole of mankind ablaze with it, like the Germanic chiefs of long ago who, before the drops of baptismal water had dried on their heads, seized axes to hew down the sacred oaks, and hastened with fire and sword to fall upon their unconverted neighbours. With leaps and bounds, with titanic energy, Tolstoy storms onward towards the faith; but there is nothing to show that he has really attained it. For, if faith signifies rest in God, and if to be a Christian means to lead a life full of tranquillity, then this man fired with splendid impatience was never a believer, this man glowing with discontent was never a Christian. Not unless we term an unquenchable thirst for religiosity, religion, and not unless we call a burning desire for God, Christlike, must this seeker after God be numbered among the faithful.

For the very reason that he was only half successful in

his quest, for the very reason that he never achieved real conviction, Tolstoy's crisis passes beyond the bounds of an individual experience to become a memorable example, teaching us that even the most iron-willed of men is unable to alter his primary disposition, unable, by any outburst of energy, to transform himself into his opposite. Our inherited disposition may be bettered in certain directions, may be modified or intensified. A moral passion may incite us to improve ourselves by deliberate effort. But it is impossible to erase the fundamental lineaments of character, or to rebuild body and mind upon a new architectural plan. When Tolstoy tells us that we can "wean ourselves from selfishness as from tobacco," or that love can be "conquered," faith "compelled," we note in contradiction the modest results in these directions he himself achieved at the cost of frenzied endeavour. There is no evidence to show that Tolstoy, the violent, unsympathetic, and nihilistic observer, the choleric being "whose eyes flashed at the least hint of contradiction," became in a moment a kindly, gentle, affectionate, socially disposed Christian, a "servant of God," and "brother" to all those he termed his brethren. No doubt his "transformation" had brought about a change in his outlooks, his opinions, his words; but not in his nature. After the "awakening," as before, his uneasy spirit was overshadowed, gloomy, prone to self-torment. Tolstoy was not born to be contented. For the very reason that he was so headstrong, God would not immediately "grant" him the gift of faith; and during the thirty years that followed the crisis, down to the last hour of his life, he had to continue the struggle. His Damascus was not over and done with in a night, nor yet in a year. To the end, Tolstoy found no answer that would satisfy him, no faith in which

he could rest. To the last moment of his life, he felt life to be a mystery.

Thus his leap towards God fell short. But the artist who is unable to cross a gulf has always one resource. He can project his own need into humanity at large, thus universalizing it. In this way Tolstoy rises above the selfish cry of terror, "what will happen to me?" to ask, "what will happen to us?" Unable to convince himself, he wants to persuade others. Unable to change himself, he tries to change mankind. Such has ever been the origin of religion. These great endeavours to better the world have arisen (Nietzsche knew it well) out of an individual's "flight from himself." A storm-tossed soul, seeking relief from the question that tortures it, generalizes that question, transforming a personal unrest into a worldwide unrest. Tolstoy, the passionate man who could have no illusions, the man whose heart was consumed with doubt, never succeeded in becoming a pious Christian after the Franciscan model; but his intimate knowledge of the torment of unfaith led him to attempt more earnestly and persistently than any other of our day to save the world from the abyss of nihilism, to make the world more believing than he himself was ever able to become. "The only refuge from despair is to project one's ego into the world." Tolstoy's questing ego writes large the terrible problems which assail it, that they may serve as warning and instruction for all mankind.

DOCTRINE

> *I have come close to a great idea, to whose realization I could devote the whole of my life. This idea is the foundation of a new religion, the religion of Christ, freed from articles of faith and from miracles.*
>
> DIARY IN YOUTH, MARCH 5, 1855

As foundation stone of his doctrine, of his "message" to mankind, Tolstoy takes the text, "Resist not evil," and gives it the arresting interpretation, "Resist not evil by force."

The whole Tolstoyan ethic is in this sentence. With all the oratorical and moral vehemence of his overstrained conscience, the great champion slung his stone so violently against the wall of our century that it was almost breached, and is still trembling from the blow. No one can measure the whole spiritual influence of the onslaught. The Russians voluntarily laying down their arms after Brest-Litovsk; Gandhi's preaching of non-resistance; Rolland's pacifist appeal during the great war; the heroic refusal of innumerable nameless men to act in defiance of conscience; the agitation for the abolition of capital punishment—these isolated and apparently disconnected movements owe a larger part of their impetus to Leo Tolstoy's message. Wherever, to-day, force is repudiated, whether as instrument, as weapon, as right, or as divine ordinance, no matter under what pretext force has been advocated, whether that of nation, religion, race, or property; where-

ever the advocates of a humanist morality refuse to shed blood, to approve the crime of war, to condone a relapse into mediæval club-law, to recognize a victory in war as an expression of God's will; there everyone filled with the spirit of moral revolt is strengthened by Tolstoy's authority, Tolstoy's example, and Tolstoy's ardour. Wherever an independent conscience, instead of appealing to the outworn formulas of the Church, to the dictatorial demands of the State, or to the maxims of a traditional and mechanically operative justice, declares that in the last resort a brotherly sentiment and nothing else must decide the issues between man and man, Tolstoy can be referred to as exemplar, Tolstoy who firmly repudiated the rights of the infallible State over the individual spirit, and who appealed to his fellows to decide every question "in accordance with the dictates of the heart."

What is Tolstoy thinking of when he speaks of "evil" as something which we have to resist, though without using force? He means force itself, absolute force, whose muscles may be hidden under the clothing of political economy, national prosperity, popular aspirations, and colonial expansion; whose will-to-power and will-to-shed-blood may wear the mask of philosophical and patriotic ideals. We must not let ourselves be humbugged. In the most alluring of its sublimations, force invariably subserves, not the brotherhood of man, but the authority of a group of men, and thus perpetuates inequality. Force means possessions, means ownership and a wish to own more; for Tolstoy all inequality begins with property. The young nobleman had learned much during the hours he spent with Proudhon in Brussels. Tolstoy, in the spirit of the most revolutionary of socialists, said: "Property is the root of all evil and all suffering, and there is danger

of a conflict between those who have too much property and those who have none." If property is to maintain itself, it must defend itself, and here defence implies aggression. Force is needed to acquire property, to increase property, and to protect property. Thus property calls in the State to its aid; and the State, in turn, safeguards its existence by organized forms of force, such as the army, the judiciary, "the whole coercive system, which serves only for the protection of property"; and anyone who accepts and recognizes the State pays homage to this principle of power. According to Tolstoy, in the modern State even the intellectuals, for all their seeming independence, are devoted to the maintenance of the system whereby property is kept in the hands of the law. Nay more, the Church of Christ, which "in its true significance aimed at the abolition of the State," turns away from its supreme duty, blesses weapons of war, argues in favour of the prevailing unjust order of the world, and for these reasons is tied up in formulas, becomes a habit, a convention. The artists, too, free born, whose mission it is to defend the claims of conscience and the rights of man, shut themselves up in their ivory towers, and "put conscience to sleep." Socialism tries to play body-physician to the incurable. The revolutionists, who are the only persons that have understood the situation sufficiently to desire a complete destruction of the existing order, make the mistake of grasping at the murderous instruments of their adversaries, and help to eternalize injustice in that they fail to attack, and indeed themselves consecrate, the essential principle of "evil"—force.

In the light of these anarchist doctrines, the State and the extant earthly relationships of human beings are built on false foundations. Tolstoy rejects, as futile and im-

practicable, the democratic, philanthropic, pacifist, and revolutionary attempts to improve the forms of government. No duma, no parliament, and above all no revolution, can deliver the nation from the "evil" of force. A house built on an untrustworthy foundation cannot be propped up. We must abandon it, and build a new one. The modern State is grounded upon the idea of power, and not upon that of fraternity. Tolstoy considers it doomed to destruction; and he holds that socialist or liberal attempts to repair it merely serve to prolong the death struggle. What needs to be altered is, not the civic relation between governors and governed, but human beings themselves. Coercion by State power must be replaced by the spiritual coherence of brotherliness, for the latter alone can give social stability. Until this religious or moral fraternity has replaced the extant coercive form of State, true morality (contends Tolstoy) is possible only outside the State, outside parties, in the invisible domain of conscience. Since the State identifies itself with force, a moral man must refrain from identifying himself with the State. What is needed is a religious revolution, thanks to which every conscientious person will cut loose from communities grounded on force.

Tolstoy resolutely turns his back on the State, and declares that he is morally independent of any dictates other than those of his own conscience. He repudiates "exclusive appurtenancy to any particular people or State, and subjection to any kind of government"; he voluntarily withdraws from the Orthodox Church; and on principle he renounces an appeal to a court of justice or to any other statutory institution of contemporary society, not wishing to have a finger in the devil's pie of a State based on force. We must not let ourselves be led astray by the

evangelical gentleness of his sermons on brotherly love, by the humility of his Christian diction, by the frequency with which he appeals to the authority of the gospels. We must not thereby be led to overlook how bitterly opposed to the State is his social criticism; we must not be deceived as to the purposive energy and obduracy with which this man, the boldest heretic of his time, this revolutionary anarchist, declares war against the dominion of tsar, Church, and all the approved State authorities. His doctrine of the State is the fiercest of attacks on the State. Just as Luther broke with the papacy, so did Tolstoy, a lone man, break with the new papacy, the infallibility of property. Even Trotsky and Lenin have not, as far as theory is concerned, advanced beyond Tolstoy's "everything must be changed." The books of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, "L'ami des hommes," were like mines driven under the foundations of the French monarchy—mines with which the revolutionists blew the old system into the air. In like manner Tolstoy's writings shook the tsarist, the capitalist, order of his country to the very foundations. In Germany, because Leo Tolstoy had a patriarchal beard, and because the powder of his doctrines was wrapped in honey, he is generally regarded as the apostle of gentleness, whereas in truth he was a revolutionist ultra. No doubt, just as Rousseau would have indignantly repudiated the methods of the sansculottes, so would Tolstoy have angrily decried the methods of the bolsheviks. Tolstoy hated political parties, writing: "Whichever party conquers, it must, if it is to retain power, not only utilize the existing means of force, but also discover new ones." Nevertheless, the unprejudiced historians of the future will admit that he smoothed the way for the Russian revolution. None of the forceful

activities of the revolutionists were so effective in undermining the old system and in shaking the old authority as were the public declarations issued by this solitary giant against the seemingly invincible powers of his homeland: against tsar, Church, and property. As soon as this brilliant diagnostician discovered the main flaw in the groundworks of our civilization, discovered that the State edifice is upbuilt, not upon humanity, or upon the community of men, but upon brutality, upon the dominion over men—for the ensuing thirty years he devoted his immense argumentative powers and his formidable moral strength to the launching of attack after attack against the established order in Russia. Willy-nilly, he became the Winkelried of the revolution; functioned as social dynamite; was a primal, an elemental destructive force: and thus, all unconscious, he fulfilled his Russian mission.

Russian thought, before it can upbuild, must clear the ground. No Russian artist has been spared the necessity of descending into the darkest depths of nihilism, before rising out of black despair to heights of new and ardent faith. Not for them, as for western Europeans, to be satisfied with timid ameliorations, with cautious and kindly attempts to prop up the old system. Like a woodman with his axe, felling the great tree with courageous and skilful blows, the Russian thinker, the Russian poet, the Russian man of action, attacks his difficulty. A Rostopshin, fired with the idea of victory, does not hesitate to commit Moscow, wonder of the world, to the flames. So Tolstoy, like Savonarola, does not hesitate to destroy all the cultural inheritance of mankind, all art and all science, in order to promote the establishment of a new and better theory. It may well be that Tolstoy, the religious dreamer, never realized what would be the practical out-

come of his onslaught; it is more than doubtful whether he thought of calculating how many earthly existences would be crushed by the sudden collapse of an edifice as wide as the heavens. Enough for him, under stress of conviction, to devote himself with all his energies and all his staying power to pulling and pushing at the pillars of the social structure. When such a Samson bows himself to his task, even the most giant of roofs will fall in. Discussions after the event as to whether Tolstoy would have approved or condemned the bolshevik revolution are superfluous, in view of the fact that nothing in the way of spiritual preparation did so much to favour the Russian revolution as Tolstoy's tirades against the superfluity of wealth, as the petards of his tracts, the bombs of his pamphlets. No critic of our age (not even Nietzsche, who, as a German, aimed his shafts at the cultured, and who, were it only by his metaphorical and Dionysian phrasing, was cut off from influencing the crowd) has exercised an influence comparable with Tolstoy's in transforming the mentality and revolutionizing the beliefs of the masses. Hence, little as Tolstoy would have desired it, his bust will stand for all time in the invisible pantheon of the great revolutionists, of those who have cast down the mighty from their seats, of those who have transformed the world.

Little as he would have desired it—for his Christian and individualist revolution, his anarchism, was sharply distinguished by him from the revolution, from the anarchism, of those who looked to attain their ends by force. Consider, for example, the following passage: "When we meet revolutionists, we often mistakenly believe that we and they can join hands. Like us, they cry: 'No State, no property, no inequality'; and in many other respects they voice our demands. But there is a great dif-

ference. For the Christian, there is no State; whereas they want to annihilate the State. For the Christian, there is no property; whereas they want to abolish property. For the Christian, all are equal; whereas they want to destroy inequality. The revolutionists fight against the government from without; whereas Christianity does not fight at all, but destroys the foundation of the State from within." Tolstoy's plan was that molecule after molecule, one individual after another, should be withdrawn from the State, until its organism succumbed from debility. But there is no difference in the ultimate effect, which is the destruction of all authority; and at this Tolstoy ever aimed. It is true that he also looked for the establishment of a new order, contraposing a State Church to the State, and a religious tie to the practical social tie that now exists. He wanted to found a humaner, a more brotherly religion, old as well as new, primitively Christian. He preached a Tolstoyan-Christian gospel. Let us, however, be perfectly frank when we are appraising his constructive ideas. We must draw a clear distinction between Tolstoy as an inspired critic of civilization, and Tolstoy as an unpractical, capricious, and illogical moralist; between Tolstoy the seer, and Tolstoy the thinker, the thinker who, in an access of pedagogical frenzy, was no longer content as he had been in the sixties to drive the peasant lads of Yasnaya Polyana into the school, but, with the levity of an arm-chair philosopher, now proposed to teach all Europe the alphabet of "right" living, to teach all Europe the one and only truth. There can be no limit to our respect for Tolstoy so long as he contents himself with criticizing the world of the senses; and so long as, with his magnificent endowments in this sensuous world, he analyses its structure. But as soon as he would fain soar into the

metaphysical, where he can no longer touch and taste and see, but where these wonderful palps of his palpate in the void, we are horrified at his spiritual incapacity. The point cannot be over-emphasized. Tolstoy as theoretician, as systematic philosopher, was as lamentable a figure as was Nietzsche (his antithesis in the world of genius) when he tried to compose. Nietzsche's musical faculty, which was gloriously productive in the realm of linguistic melody, was hopelessly inadequate in the realm of tone. In like manner, Tolstoy's intellectual faculty went woefully astray as soon as he ventured beyond the sensuous and critical sphere into the theoretical and abstract. This lack of balance in his endowments can be traced in his works.

For instance, in the pamphlet *What Is to be Done*, the first part describes the poverty-stricken quarters of Moscow concretely, with a mastery that takes the reader's breath away. In the second part, Tolstoy the utopist moves on from diagnosis to therapeutics, tells the reader how, in his opinion, things can be bettered. At once the ideas are clouded, the outlines grow hazy. This confusion increases from problem to problem, the more boldly he moves onward. Nor can it be denied that he moved onward boldly enough. Though he has had no philosophical training, in his tracts and pamphlets, with terrifying irreverence, he touches on all the eternally insoluble problems which range into the infinite, and "solves" them as easily as if he were melting glue in a pot. For just as, during the crisis, the impetuous man wanted to indue a "faith" as easily as if he were putting on a sheepskin coat, expected to become Christian and humble in a night, so in these writings which are to educate the world he expects to grow a forest in less time than it takes to plant a sapling. The man who in 1878 had declared that our

whole earthly life was unmeaning, is ready three years later to offer us his universal theology as the solution of all the enigmas of the world. It need hardly be said that one who thinks at such dizzy speed, and builds with such desperate haste, must necessarily be impatient of contradiction. That is why Tolstoy stops his ears when he sets to work, why he overrules every objection, and desires no approval but his own. How wavering must be the faith of him whose only concern is "to bear testimony"; how illogical, how insecurely based must be the thought of him who, as soon as arguments fail, quotes a text from the Bible as irrefutable support! It cannot be too emphatically asserted that Tolstoy's didactic writings are but zealotry, and are among the most unpleasant specimens of this unpleasant kind of literature; they are confused, arbitrary, and (this amazes us in the case of Tolstoy the devotee of truth) positively dishonest.

Indeed this most veracious of artists, this most exemplary of moralists, this great and almost saintly man, does not run straight as a theoretician. Wanting to put the boundless world of thought into his philosophical sack, he begins with a crude conjuring trick, simplifying all the problems to an extreme, so that they can be handled as easily as playing cards. He arranges them in his pack: "man," "good," "evil," "sin," "sensuality," "brotherliness," "faith," and so on. Shuffling the cards with the ostensible openness of a card-sharper, he turns up "love" as trump, and wins the game. In one short hour, the riddle of the universe, infinite and insoluble, whose answer has been vainly sought for a thousand generations, is solved by him as he sits at his desk; and the old man smiles like a happy child, delighted and astonished to see "how simple it is after all." He finds it inexplicable that for

thousands of years the philosophers, the men of genius, who lie in thousands of coffins, in thousands of countries, should have wrestled with this enigma so strenuously, and should never have noticed that "truth," the whole truth, has long since been set forth clear as daylight in the gospels—provided always that you interpret them as he, Leo Nikolaevich, interprets them in the year of our Lord 1878, "understanding them rightly for the first time in eighteen hundred years," and at long last stripping from the divine message the plaster with which it has been covered (yes, such are his very words!). Now our troubles are ended. Men will surely recognize, at length, how simple life is. They need merely scrap the causes of their troubles. Let them do away with the State, religion, art, civilization, property, marriage. Then they will have freed themselves for ever from "evil" and "sin." When each man ploughs his own plot of land, bakes his own bread, and cobbles his own boots, there will be no more State and no more religions, but only the Kingdom of God upon earth. For "God is love, and love is the aim of life." Away, then, with books; trouble no more to think; "love" suffices; everything can be achieved to-morrow, "if only men have the will."

One who thus reproduces the actual tenor of the Tolstoyan theological system is likely to be charged with exaggeration. Unfortunately, it is Tolstoy himself who, in his proselytizing zeal, exaggerates so heinously; it is Tolstoy himself, who, wishing to make up for the poverty of his arguments, has recourse to such preposterous metaphors. How admirable, how clear, how irrefutable, is his fundamental notion, his gospel of non-resistance. This is what he demands from us all; this, and spiritual humility.

He warns us to avert the otherwise inevitable conflict which will issue from the increasing inequality between the different social strata; to avert the revolution from beneath by voluntarily beginning it from above, and to obviate the use of force by a primitive Christian renunciation of force. The rich man is to rid himself of his wealth; the intellectual is to free himself from arrogance; the artists are to quit their ivory towers and to mingle with the people. We are to tame our passions, our "animal" personality; and, instead of encouraging greed, we are to cultivate the capacity for giving. Beyond question, these are splendid precepts, whose reiteration is essential to the progress of mankind. But Tolstoy, in his impatience, is not content as most religious teachers have been content to demand such things as the supreme acquirements of choice individuals; he insists that all shall display these gentle qualities, without exception, instantly. In his desire to convert the world to his way of thinking, he lapses into hyperbole, insisting that we shall all of us, in a trice, renounce the objects towards which we are driven by imperious urges. The sexagenarian adjures young men to practise a sexual continence which was not characteristic of himself in youth; for artists and thinkers he prescribes, not merely indifference towards, but positive contempt for, art and thought, to which he has himself been hitherto devoted. In his eagerness to convince everyone that extant civilization has no foundations worthy of respect, he sets out to demolish with mighty strokes all the props of our intellectual world. In his eagerness to make unqualified asceticism more attractive, he calumniates our latter-day culture, our artists, our imaginative writers, our technicians, and our men of science, passing beyond the realm of exaggeration into that

of crude untruth. Nor does he hesitate to calumniate himself, since that helps him to clear the ground for attacks on others.

Are we really to suppose that Leo Tolstoy, one of whose most faithful companions and advisers was a private physician, in actual fact regarded medical science and its practitioners as "unnecessary things," life as a "sin," and cleanliness as "superfluous luxury"? Is it true that Tolstoy, whose writings fill a bookshelf, lived the life of a "useless parasite," was no better than a "plant-louse"? Read his words: "I eat, chatter, listen, eat again, write and read, this meaning that I speak and listen once more, then I eat again, amuse myself, eat and talk once more, then I eat again, and go to bed," and ask yourself whether that was actually the way in which *War and Peace* and *Anna Karenina* were created. Is it true that this man, to whose eyes the tears rise when he listens to one of Chopin's sonatas, is like a Puritan, and regards music as nothing more than the devil's bagpipes? Did he honestly believe that Beethoven was a "seducer to sensuality," that Shakespeare's plays were "meaningless twaddle," that Nietzsche's writings were "coarse, foolishly emphatic babble," that Pushkin's works were "only fit to use as cigarette paper for the people"? This man who served art so magnificently—can he in actual fact have looked upon art as nothing more than "the luxury of idlers"; and did he believe his own words when he said that the opinions of Grisha the tailor and Pyotr the shoemaker were of more moment to him than those of Turgenieff or Dostoeffsky? He who had been "an indefatigable whoremonger" in youth and who had subsequently procreated thirteen children in lawful wedlock—did he honestly believe that young men, moved by his appeals, would all

become skoptsy, would all emasculate themselves? We see that Tolstoy is frenzied in his exaggerations, and we infer that he is driven to exaggerate by an uneasy conscience, in the hope that by exaggeration he will be able to hide the paucity of his arguments.

Sometimes, indeed, he seems to have had an inkling that this nonsense is nullified by its own excess, as when he writes: "I have very little hope that my propositions will be accepted, or even seriously discussed." How painfully true! When he was alive, it was impossible to argue with this champion of non-resistance. "Nobody can convince Leo Tolstoy," sighs his wife. "He is so opinionated that he can never admit having made a mistake," reports another woman, one of his most intimate friends. Now, when he is dead, it would be absurd to take up the cudgels against him on behalf of Beethoven or Shakespeare! Those who love Tolstoy follow the wisest course by ignoring him when he makes too obvious a display of illogicality. No one whose opinion is worth a rap has ever been led by Tolstoy's theological outbursts to accept the view that it behoves us to abandon a struggle which has been going on for thousands of years, the struggle to guide life by reason; that it behoves us to scrap all the most notable acquisitions of the human spirit. This Europe of ours, in which such a master of thought as Nietzsche was so recently born, a region to whose cultivation of the powers of the mind we owe it that this difficult world has become habitable—this Europe of ours has certainly no inclination, in obedience to the ipse dixit of a fantastical moralist, to return to a peasant, a Mongolian, simplicity; to return to a life in skin tents; to adjure its intellectual past as "sinful" error. Europe has been and will remain respectful enough to draw a distinction between Tolstoy

the champion of the individual conscience, and the Tolstoy who made desperate efforts to develop a nervous crisis into a philosophy, to transform a climacteric anxiety into a system of economics. We shall always distinguish between the fine moral impulses which were the outcome of what was best in the riper years of this artist's life; and the attempt to exorcise civilization as an evil demon, which is the characteristic fruit of the theories of his old age. Tolstoy's earnestness and realism have quickened the conscience of our generation; but the theories we are now considering are nothing more than an attack upon the joy of life, are the expression of an ascetic desire to lapse from civilization into an impossible primitive Christianity, as conceived by the imagination of a man who was no longer a Christian and had therefore transcended Christianity.

Who believes that "abstinence is the very essence of life," that we should burden ourselves with duties and regulate our conduct by Bible texts in a way that would drain all the blood from our veins? We live for this world, not for another, and we do not put our trust in an interpreter who knows naught of the procreative and invigorating power of joy. We refuse to surrender the acquirements of our reasoning faculties and our technique; to abandon the heritage of western civilization; to make a bonfire of our books, our pictures, our cities, and our science. We will not part with a grain of palpable and visible reality at the bidding of any philosopher, and least of all at the bidding of one who preaches a reactionary and depressing doctrine, who counsels us to withdraw from the town into the steppe, to exchange a life of intellectual activity for one of spiritual dullness. No promise of heavenly bliss will induce us to barter away the bewildering plenitude of our earthly existence for a

narrow simplicity. We would rather be "sinful" than primitive, would rather enjoy our passions than become stupid and biblically devout. That is why Europe has put away Tolstoy's sociological theories in its literary deed-boxes, with due respect for the ethical will that inspires them, but determined to pay no further heed to them. For we are convinced that the retrograde and the reactionary can never be creative, even though they present themselves in the most religious of garbs, and even though they are advocated by a man of genius; and we are sure that the product of mental confusion can never tend to bring clarity of vision to the world. Finally, we will not listen to this gospel because Tolstoy, though he has driven the ploughshare of his criticism more deeply than any other into the soil of our time, has not enriched that soil with a single grain of seed destined to bear fruit in our European future—being herein typically Russian, the embodiment of the spirit of his race and his generation.

Beyond question, the meaning and the mission of the spirit of Russia during the last hundred years have found expression in the holy unrest and the relentless passion with which the depths of our moral nature have been explored, with which the roots of all social problems have been exposed; and perforce we bow in veneration before the collective genius of Russian artists. If to-day our feelings run in deeper channels than of yore, if our knowledge has become more resolute, if our outlooks on the problems of time and eternity are more steadfast and more tragical and more unflinching than of old, we have to thank Russia and Russian literature for this boon, as also for the creative unrest which leads us towards a new truth transcending the ancient verities. Russian thought

is a ferment of the spirit, which endows that spirit with enhanced energies; but it does not promote lucidity like the thought of Spinoza, Montaigne, and some of the Germans. The Russians have given magnificent help towards the spiritual expansion of the world, and no artists of modern times have ploughed and harrowed the soul more effectively than Tolstoy and Dostoeffsky. But neither of them has helped us in upbuilding a new order; and when they seek to convince us that the chaos which exists in the depths of their own minds must be accepted as the meaning of the world, we cannot but reject their teaching. Both Tolstoy and Dostoeffsky, seized with terror at the contemplation of the abysses of their own nihilism, and overwhelmed with a primal anxiety, seek refuge in religious reaction. That they may escape falling into the gulf their own imaginations have created, they cling to the Christian cross, and spread a cloud athwart the Russian world at the very time when Nietzsche's clarifying lightnings are rending to tatters the old anxieties about heaven, and when Nietzsche has bestowed upon Europeans the gift of faith in their own power and freedom.

How strange a spectacle! Tolstoy and Dostoeffsky, the greatest Russians of their day, are suddenly smitten with apocalyptic terrors, lay aside their work, and uplift a Russian cross, both of them appealing to Christ (though to different Christs) as saviour of a dying world. Like frenzied mediæval monks, they stand in their pulpits, hostile each to the other in spirit as in their lives. Dostoeffsky is an arch-reactionary, a defender of the autocracy, a preacher of war and terror, an admirer of excess of power, devotee of the tsar who had cast him into prison, worshipper of an imperialistic and world-conquering re-

deemer. Tolstoy no less fanatically scorns what Dostoeffsky admires, is mystically anarchistic just as Dostoeffsky is mystically servile, stigmatizing the tsar as an assassin, Church and State as robbers, and fulminating against war. He, likewise, has the name of Christ on his lips and holds the New Testament in his hand. Both of them are reactionaries who, urged onward by fears that well up from within, would fain push the world back into humility and mental hebetude. Surely both of them must have been prophetically inspired; they must have had premonitions of the destruction of the world; they must have foreseen that an earthquake was impending in Russia. Is not this the mission of the poiete, that he shall see in advance the lightnings, shall hear in advance the crash of thunder; that he shall feel in advance the pangs which will accompany the birth of a new time? With their calls to repentance, these wrathful prophets, who had visions of the coming destruction and did nothing to avert the omen, seem like gigantic figures come down to us out of the Old Testament, unparalleled in the modern world.

They have no power to do more than sense what is coming; they can do nothing to change the course of events. Dostoeffsky execrates the revolution, but hardly is he in his tomb before the bomb which kills the tsar is thrown. Tolstoy rails against war and demands love on earth, but spring has not greened four times over his grave before the most horrible of fratricidal struggles desecrates the world. The characters in his books, offspring of an art which in later years he despised, outlive the ravages of time; but his doctrines have been overthrown by the first gusts. He did not live to see the collapse of his kingdom of God, the hopeless failure of his gospel of love; but he must have looked forward to what would

happen. During the last year of his life, when he was seated among his friends, a letter was brought to him. Opening it, he read as follows:

"No, Leo Nikolaevich, I cannot agree with you that human relations may be bettered by love alone. None but carefully brought up and well-fed persons can say that. What message have you for those who have been hungry from earliest childhood, and who throughout life have groaned under the yoke of tyrants? They will fight; they will try to free themselves from slavery. On the eve of your death, Leo Nikolaevich, I tell you that the world will once again be drenched with blood; more than once the masters, without distinction of sex, they and their children, will be slaughtered and torn to pieces, that the earth may no longer have to look for evil at their hands. I am sorry that you will not live to see this day, on which the evidence of your own eyes would convince you that you have been wrong. I wish you a peaceful death."

No one knows who wrote this ominous letter. Was it penned by Trotsky or by Lenin, or by one of the nameless revolutionists mouldering in Schlüsselburg? We shall never know. Likely enough, by the time he received it, Tolstoy was already aware that his teaching was in hopeless conflict with the realities of life, that passion has more influence on men's actions than brotherly love. We are told that his face became overshadowed as he read the letter, and that he looked thoughtful as he took it away with him into his room, his spirit troubled with forebodings.

STRUGGLE FOR REALIZATION

It is easier to write ten volumes of philosophy than to put one principle into practice.

DIARY, 1847

In his later years, Tolstoy spent much of his time over the Bible. With disquietude he must have pondered the text: "They have sown the wind, and they shall reap the whirlwind," for the prophecy was certainly fulfilled in his own life. A man who casts his spiritual unrest into the world will assuredly rue it, above all if he be a great man. Intensified a thousandfold, the trouble will return into his own breast. To-day, when the topic has grown cold, it is hard to realize what extravagant expectations were aroused by Tolstoy's message, in the Russian world first of all, and afterwards across the frontiers. This message produced a spiritual uproar, stirred the folk conscience to its depths. Vainly did the Russian autocracy, alarmed by the widespread response, hasten to suppress Tolstoy's polemic writings. They passed from hand to hand in typewritten copies, and editions printed abroad were smuggled into Russia. The more virulently the author attacked the foundations of the existing order, and the more ardently he advocated the establishment of a new and better order, the louder was the echo in the hearts of his fellows. Men are ever ready to listen to a gospel of redemption. To-day, railways and telegraphs and wireless notwithstanding, despite our microscopes and other

technical marvels, the world of the moral life is athrill with messianic expectations, just as it was in the days of Jesus, Mohammed, and Buddha. Now, as of old, man is eager for miracles; now, as of old, the soul of the masses thirsts for a teacher and a leader. Always, therefore, one who presents himself as a redeemer can look for the customary reaction on the part of the redemptionist nerves of his fellow mortals; and the prophet who is bold enough to say "I know the truth" can count upon a number of self-sacrificing disciples.

Thus it was that towards the close of the nineteenth century, when Tolstoy announced his apostolic mission, millions upon millions of Russians were ready to heed his message. *My Confession*, which for us has long ceased to be anything more than a document of psychological interest, fired youthful believers like a new Book of Revelation. "At length," they said, rejoicing, "a mighty man and a free spirit, known far and wide as the greatest Russian writer of the day, has voiced the demand which has hitherto been voiced by the disinherited, or whispered in secret by those who are still little better than serfs. He has declared that the extant order of the world is unjust, immoral, and therefore untenable; and he insists that a new and better form must be discovered. An unexpected impetus has been conveyed to all malcontents. Moreover, it has not come from one of those whose profession is to make phrases about progress, but from a man of independent and incorruptible personality, whose authority and sincerity no one will dream of challenging. This man, we are given to understand, wishes to set an example by the conduct of his own life, by every action he performs. A count, he refuses to avail himself of the privileges of nobility; a wealthy man, he would fain discard his pro-

prietary rights; born and brought up among the great, he prefers to participate in the working community of the people, to the end that religious brotherhood shall replace the tyranny of the State, and that the divine kingdom of love shall be substituted for the tsardom of force." Tidings of this new redeemer of the dispossessed soon filter down to the uncultured, to the peasants, to the illiterate; the first disciples come together; the Tolstoyans begin to follow their teacher's injunctions word by word and letter by letter; and behind this small group of the faithful there waits and watches the huge mass of the oppressed, wondering whether for them, so often disappointed, hope has at length dawned. Millions of hearts are glowing, millions of eyes are centred on Tolstoy the revealer, eagerly watching his every action. "He has learned, and he will teach us."

Yet, strangely enough, Tolstoy does not at first seem to realize how great is his responsibility, now that, so unexpectedly, a vast multitude of adherents is scrutinizing his private life. Of course he is perspicacious enough to be aware that one who is to reveal a new doctrine of life must not be content with the writing of precepts, but must demonstrate the reality of his teaching by his own example. Yet in the early days of his mission he makes the mistake of thinking that he does enough when he symbolically indicates by his behaviour his conviction that his social and moral demands are practicable, by giving, now and again, a sign of willingness to act on his own principles. Thus he dresses like a peasant, in order to obliterate the outward distinction between lord and underling; he works in the fields with scythe and plough, and has his portrait painted in this guise by Repin, that everyone may have ocular demonstration of what he thinks. "I do

not regard manual labour in the fields, the honest toil by which bread is made, as shameful; and no one ought to be ashamed of it, seeing that I, Leo Tolstoy, who (as you all know) need not do such work, I, whose powers in the intellectual world might be supposed to excuse him from activities in the physical, am glad to undertake these latter." To purge his soul of the "sin" of ownership, he assigns his property (which at that date already amounted to more than half a million roubles) to his wife and family, and refuses to receive any more money or money's worth for his writings. To the poor and lowly, to anyone who asks, he gives alms and time; and he tenders brotherly help wherever injustice is done.

Ere long he has to recognize that more than this is demanded of him. The great mass of the faithful, the "people," with which he seeks to become identified, is not content with these intellectualized symbols of humility, but asks that he should share, without qualification and without pause, the miseries and misfortunes of the folk. The crown of martyrdom—that is what the prophet must wear if he is to inspire perfect faith, to arouse unshakable conviction. The founder of a religion must not limit himself to an allusive attitude, to one which simply promises; he must demonstrate his own faith by absolute self-surrender. All that Tolstoy has hitherto done to strengthen his followers' belief in the practicability of his doctrines has been to make humble gestures, to perform actions symbolical of humility, comparable to those demanded of the Pope and of the strictly orthodox among the emperors, who once a year, on Maundy Thursday, wash the feet of twelve old men. This ceremony is designed to show that even the most exalted of mortals cannot be debased by the meanest of occupations. Just as

little as the Pope or the Emperor of Austria or the King of Spain really forfeited power, really became a servant, thanks to the performance of this annual ceremony, just so little did the distinguished author and great nobleman become a shoemaker because he worked for an hour with awl and waxed thread, become a peasant because he did a morning's labour in the fields from time to time, become a mendicant because he assigned his property to his housemates. In these ways, he may have demonstrated the practicability of his doctrines, but he was not effectively practising them. It was effective practice that the folk wanted of him. Under stress of a deep-rooted instinct, they demanded an unqualified sacrifice, and would not accept the will—the symbol—for the deed. The disciples took a more literal view of the teaching than did the teacher. They were disappointed, disillusioned, when, making pilgrimage to the abiding place of this advocate of voluntary poverty, they noted that, at Yasnaya Polyana, as in other manors, the peasants were still poverty stricken, whereas Leo Tolstoy was still a nobleman who welcomed his guests in the grand style, thereby writing himself down as a member of that "class of persons who, by all kinds of artifices, rob the people of the necessaries of life." The loudly proclaimed assignment of property did not manifest itself as a genuine renunciation, as an acceptance of the poor man's lot. The pilgrims found the author living as comfortably as ever, and the hours at the plough-tail or at the cobbler's last did not suffice to stifle their doubts. "What sort of man is this, who preaches one thing and does another?" mutters an old peasant angrily. Revolutionary minded students and declared communists are even harsher in their judgment of such wobbling twixt precept and practice. By degrees, even

the most ardent of his followers are disconcerted by his half-measures. Admonitory letters, fierce invectives, enjoin him, either to repudiate the doctrines he does not practise, or else to practise them to the full.

Alarmed by these appeals, Tolstoy comes in the end to recognize how extensive are the demands he is making; and to perceive that, if his mission is to be a live one, words must yield place to deeds, and advice to others must be backed up by a thoroughgoing transformation of his own existence. "One who wishes to be heard by men must confirm truth by suffering, and, better still, by death." Thus Tolstoy is forced to shoulder obligations which he did not foresee when he began his mission. Perplexed, alarmed, uncertain of his own strength, harried with anxiety, he takes up his cross, determined that henceforward his actions shall be the embodiment of his convictions; resolved that, in a mocking and chattering world, he will be a saintly exponent of his religious faith.

"Saintly"; the word has been uttered, despite the risk of mockery. There can be no doubt that in this sober age of ours, the figure of the saint looks absurd, not to say impossible—an anachronistic survival from the middle ages. In this case the feeling of anachronism relates only to the emblems of sainthood, and to its cult. These are unquestionably out of date. Nevertheless, the saintly type, having once appeared on earth, recurs ever and again in the eternal recurrence of the similar which we term history. In every epoch, certain persons are impelled to attempt a saintly existence, for the religious sentiment of mankind perpetually feels the need for this highest form of spiritual life, and perpetually recreates it, though with attributes which necessarily differ with the changing times. Our modern conception of the sanctification of existence

by spiritual ardour has little in common with the woodcuts that illustrate the Golden Legend or with the petrified rigidity of the anchorites in the desert. We have long since given up connecting the idea of sainthood with the utterances of oecumenical councils and the decisions of papal conclaves. When we talk of a life as saintly, we mean that it is heroical in the sense of entire devotion to a religiously conceived ideal. The intellectual ecstasy, the ascetic loneliness, of the iconoclast of Sils-Maria, and the amazing abstinence of the lens-polisher of Amsterdam, seems to us as impressive as the physical ecstasy of a flagellant. Even to-day, when miracles are out of fashion, when we write with a machine and read by electric light, in the modern cities whose wide streets divide them into perfectly rectangular blocks, there is still place for saints to bear witness to the power of conscience. Where we differ from our forefathers is that we no longer find it necessary to look upon these rare and remarkable beings as infallible, as uplifted out of all danger of lapsing into earthly peccadilloes. On the contrary, we love them in their crises and their struggles; and we sympathize with them most keenly, not despite their weaknesses, but because of these. Our generation does not look for saints who are to be regarded as messengers from a superhuman realm, but for saints whom it can honour as the most human among men.

That is why, in Tolstoy's strenuous endeavour to make his life a model one, we are especially touched by his vacillations, and are more moved by his failures than we should have been by an incredible sanctity. Even when we are unable to share his views, the suffering he endured in the attempt to realize them convinces us of the loftiness of his aims. Inasmuch as Tolstoy attempts to

emerge from the conventional forms of life, and to act in accordance with those principles which are timeless and eternal, his life assumes the aspect of a tragedy greater than any we have witnessed since Nietzsche's. Such a forcible cutting adrift from all the relations of family life, from the habits of the nobleman, the ties of wealth, the customs of his rank and his epoch, could not be effected without the painful laceration of a closely meshed nervous network, without inflicting grievous suffering upon himself and those near and dear to him. Tolstoy did not dread the pain. A true Russian, and therefore an extremist, he was not merely willing to be put to the test, but positively thirsted to give visible proof that his conviction was genuine. He had long been weary of the comforts of life; family happiness, fame, the outward tokens of veneration, had begun to disgust him; unconsciously, the creative elements in him were longing for a tenser and more diversified existence, for a more intimate communion with the primal energies of mankind, for poverty and suffering, whose formative influences he did not come to recognize until after the crisis. He wanted to live as the lowliest must live; without home or money or family; dirty, lousy, despised; persecuted by the State and rejected by the Church. To give plain demonstration that his humility was genuine, he wanted to experience in his own person the life which in his books he had described as best fitted to promote spiritual development; the life of one who is homeless, propertyless, driven onward by fate like a leaf by the autumn winds. In this matter, history, the supreme artist, has constructed another of her brilliantly ironical antitheses. Tolstoy spontaneously and urgently desired the fate which had been imposed from without upon his counterpart Dostoeffsky. For Dostoeff-

sky had suffered at the cruel hands of fate all that Tolstoy, eager for martyrdom, now sought on principle. To Dostoeffsky poverty clung like the shirt of Nessus, which seared his flesh, and denied him every possibility of joy. He wandered, homeless, from country to country, tortured by illness. The tsar's soldiers bound him to the post of execution, and then, when he was reprieved from death, hustled him away to a Siberian prison. All these sufferings which Tolstoy needed (so he thought) for the demonstration of his doctrine, for the realization of his social ideal, were squandered on Dostoeffsky; whereas Tolstoy, who yearned for martyrdom, was not vouchsafed this boon.

Tolstoy is never able to achieve a demonstration of his will-to-passion. Fate bars his road to martyrdom. He wants to be poor, to give all his possessions to his fellowmen, to refrain from making any more money out of his writings; but his family will not allow him to be poor, and the great property goes on growing in the hands of his housemates. He would like to lead a solitary life; but his fame increases, so that he is beseiged by interviewers and other visitors. He would fain be despised; but the more he rails at himself, the more contemptuously he talks of his own work, and the more persistently he questions his own uprightness, the more do others regard him with veneration. He would be glad to lead the life of a peasant, to dwell in a smoke-grimed hut, unknown and untroubled, or to wander as pilgrim and mendicant; but his family takes the utmost care of him, and, to his great annoyance, surrounds him with the modern conveniences which he scorns. He yearns to be prosecuted, to be imprisoned and scourged, saying, "It is painful to me that I have to live in freedom"; but the authorities are long-

suffering, refuse to treat him harshly, and are content to deal with his followers, some of whom are knouted and sent to Siberia. At length, therefore, as a last resort, he showers abuse on the tsar, hoping that after this public demonstration he will be allowed, publicly, to expiate his offence and thus prove the reality of his convictions; but Nicholas II, when one of his ministers lodges a complaint, says, "Take no steps against Leo Tolstoy, for I do not intend to make a martyr of him." A shrewd decision, for martyrdom was what Tolstoy most ardently desired during the last years of his life, and this was the one thing fate would not grant him. Enraged, like a madman in a padded room, Tolstoy, prisoned by the intangible walls of his own fame, laid about him with blows that were void of effect, reviling himself, reviling State, Church, and all other constituted authorities. These authorities listened to him politely, hat in hand, treating him indulgently as a harmless lunatic. The demonstration for which he had hoped, the public martyrdom which he craved, were for ever denied him.

But why—the question came impatiently from his admirers, and mockingly from his adversaries—why did he not resolutely put an end to this distressing, this absurd contradiction? Why did he not make a clean sweep of photographers and reporters? Why did he allow the members of his family to go on receiving money for the sale of his books? Why did he allow those with whom he lived, those who would not accept his teaching, those who regarded wealth and comfort as the chief goods of life, to do as they pleased in these matters? Why did he not follow the call of his own conscience? Tolstoy was never able to answer these terrible questions, and never tried to excuse himself for his failure. None of the chatterers who

were so ready to draw attention to the glaring contrast between precept and practice could judge him more harshly than he judged himself. In 1908, he wrote in his diary: "If I were to hear of a stranger that he lived in luxury, took all he could from the peasants, looked on inertly when they were arrested, while calling himself a Christian and preaching Christianity to others, while doling out halfpence as alms, while taking shelter behind his wife from the consequences of all his mean actions—I should not hesitate to call him a scoundrel! That is what must be said of me, since I profess to renounce the vanities of the world and to live only for the things of the spirit." Leo Tolstoy did not need anyone else to inform him that there was a conflict between will and action. Questioning himself in his diary, he wrote: "Do you yourself live in accordance with the principles you teach?" And he answered despairingly: "No, I am utterly ashamed, am guilty, and contemptible." He had no doubt whatever that there could be but one logical outcome to his profession of faith; that he ought to leave his home, to renounce his title of nobility, to abandon his art, and "to wander as a pilgrim upon the roads of Russia." But he could never constrain himself to take the necessary step.

So be it! For me, the mystery of this weakness, this incapacity for a ruthless carrying out of his own principles, is the crowning beauty of Tolstoy's character. There is something inhuman about perfection. The saint, even if he be an apostle of gentleness, must be capable of hardness. He must be able to impose upon his disciples the inhuman task of leaving father and mother, of abandoning wife and children, in order to attain sanctity. A consistent, a perfectly rounded existence, is possible only to an individual cut adrift from his fellows, to one who

lives in a vacuum; it is not possible to one who has ties and associations. That is why, in all ages, the path of the saint has led into the desert, as the only place where a saint can be at home. Tolstoy, likewise, in order to realize the ultimate consequences of his doctrine, would have had, not only to renounce Church and State, but also to quit the warm and intimate environment of the family. For thirty years he lacked the strength needed for this act of violence. Twice he fled, and twice he returned. The thought that his wife, in her despair, might kill herself, paralysed his will, blunted the edge of its brutality. He could not make up his mind (you may censure him as illogical, but you cannot fail to admire him for his humanity) to sacrifice another to his own abstract idea. Rather than break with his children, rather than drive his wife to suicide, he reluctantly endured an association in which there was no spiritual community. Too humane to hurt those with whom he lived, in decisive matters (like that of his will, and that of the sale of his books) he bowed to the wishes of his family, and preferred to accept suffering for himself than cause suffering to others. Hard as the struggle was, he would rather be a frail human being than an obdurate saint.

He accepts all the blame for his lukewarmness and lack of consistency. He knows that every guttersnipe can gibe at him, that every honest man can question his uprightness, that every one of his disciples can condemn him; but here Tolstoy displays magnificent endurance throughout these dark years, and bows to the accusation of duplicity without attempting to excuse himself. "In the eyes of men my position may well seem a false one; perhaps this is necessary," he writes in 1898. He is beginning to understand the special character of his probation; to un-

derstand that an inglorious martyrdom such as his, that having to suffer unjust accusations without being able to put up a defence or offer an excuse, is a harder lot than that of one who is martyred publicly and dramatically. "I often wished to suffer, would gladly have endured persecution, but that was only an expression of slothfulness, of the wish that others should do the work for me, they tormenting me, while all I had to do was to suffer." The most impatient of men, one who would gladly have dived over head and ears into torture, who would have been willing to go to the stake for his convictions, has come to recognize that for him has been reserved the far more dreadful fate of being roasted at a slow fire, of suffering at one and the same time from the contempt of the uninitiated and from the reproaches of his own conscience. Hour after hour he perceives his own inconsistency, must blame himself for his sins of omission, must censure himself for his own futility; yet at the same time he feels that his discontent is essential, for it humbles his pride and reveals to him his own weakness. Again and again it is forced upon him that he is incompetent to perform his supreme task, that of setting a good example; and that he is unable to fulfil his most intimate aspiration, that of leading a saintly life in which he will be true to himself. With infinite shame he admits that he cannot realize in his own practice the things he is demanding of all mankind. This secret cancer of the mind makes his closing years far more tragical than they would have been had he been able to play the part of consistent hero. It is for the very reason that he did not fulfil, could not fulfil, his own ethical demands, that the figure of this great moralist is so impressive.

Tolstoy, with his genius for self-criticism, was harsher

than all objective accusers in his suspicion as to the purity of his own motives. What his adversaries often whispered, their accusation that in adopting the role of redeemer and in making public proclamation of humility he had been influenced by a desire to appear in the limelight, and not by straightforward motives at all—this terrible charge is inexorably pressed home by Tolstoy against himself. Those who want to know what torments of conscience he suffered in the attempt to attain clarity as to his own motives should read the posthumous story *Father Sergius.* St. Teresa, alarmed by her visions, anxiously asked her confessor whether these manifestations really came from God, and might not have been sent by the devil to test her pride. So Tolstoy, in this story, asks himself whether his sayings and doings before men can really be of divine origin, can really spring from a moral source, or whether they may not derive from the devil of vanity, be the outcome of vaingloriousness, of a delight in popular adulation. Thinly veiled in *Father Sergius* is an account of his own position at Yasnaya Polyana. To the saint in the story, the wonder-working monk, flock penitents and admirers, just as to Tolstoy flock the believers, the curious, and those hunting for a new sensation. Like Tolstoy, his double in the story, at the very time when his adherents are thronging round him, is asking himself whether he, whom they honour as a saint, is indeed saintly in his heart. He inquires: "To what extent are the things which I do, done for love of God, and to what extent are they done only for the approbation of man?" Tolstoy answers his own question through Father Sergius' mouth. He feels in the depths of his soul that the devil has transformed his activities for the love of God into other activities, designed to secure the approbation of man. He is aware

that, whereas in former days he would have been glad if visitors had not come to disturb his solitude, he would now find solitude an affliction. His visitors are a nuisance; they weary him: but, in his innermost heart, he enjoys their coming, delights in their adulation. He has less and less time for reflection and prayer. He sometimes feels that he is like a place out of which a spring had burst forth, "a gently flowing spring of living water, which streamed out of me and through me. Now the water can no longer collect in a pool, for so many thirsty folk press round the spring, jostling one another, and trampling the ground, that there is nothing left but a patch of mire." There is no more love in him, no humility, no purity.

Thus does Tolstoy repudiate attempts to canonize him, esteeming himself as nothing more than a seeker, as nothing more than one who is laboriously and with faltering steps striving towards God. Through the mouth of his double, he asks himself: "Had you not an honest desire to serve God?" The answer threatens to slam all the doors leading to saintliness: "Yes, there was such a desire, but it has been befouled and overgrown by vaingloriousness. There is no God for such as I, no God for one who has lived to win man's approbation." Still, a ray of hope shines through the darkness: "None the less, I will seek him."

"I will seek him." Here we have the expression of Tolstoy's truest will. His destiny, he thinks, is not to find God, but only to seek God. He will not be one of those who can solve riddles for mankind, but only one of those who help their fellows to ask new questions, and to ask them more sincerely and ruthlessly than before. He has not become a saint, a redeemer; has not even been able to reshape his own life unambiguously. He has remained

a man among men, rising to greatness at one instant, to lapse into pettiness the next; a man full of weaknesses and inadequacies and equivocations, but quick to recognize his errors, and filled with eagerness to attain perfection. Not a saint, but a man inspired by a saintly will; not a believer, but endowed with a titanic longing for faith; not an image of the divine, tranquil in its perfection, but a symbol of the human, which can never rest content with its acquirements, but must, day by day and hour by hour, continue the struggle.

A DAY IN TOLSTOY'S LIFE

Family life is depressing to me because I am unable to share the sentiments of my associates. The things which please them—distinction in school examinations, worldly success, shopping and marketing—these things seem to me misfortunes, bad for them all, though I cannot tell them so. Or, indeed, I can and do tell them, but nobody understands what I say.

DIARY

From the descriptions of his friends and from his own words, I compile the following account of one day among thousands similarly spent by Leo Tolstoy.

It is early morning. The old man awakens slowly, looks around. The light of dawn already shows through the window. Thought springs from its dark recess. His first feeling, one of happy astonishment, is: "I am still alive!" Last night, as was customary with him, he had lain down to sleep humbly prepared to accept his fate if there was to be no awakening. By the flickering light of the lamp, when writing in his diary next day's date, he had added three letters, the initials of the Russian words meaning "if I live." Now, wonderful to relate, the gift of existence has again been bestowed on him. He lives, breathes, is in good health. He draws deep breaths of the air which comes to him as a greeting from God, and with his grey eyes he eagerly scans the growing light. How wonderful to be alive and well! Thankfully the old

man gets out of bed, and strips. His well preserved body glows in vigorous reaction to the touch of ice-cold water. He exercises like a young gymnast. Then, having dressed, he opens the window and sweeps out the room, tosses billets of wood upon the crackling fire. He is his own servant.

Now he goes to the breakfast room, to find Sofia Andreevna, his daughters, his secretary, and a few friends, already in their places, while the samovar is singing on the table. The secretary brings him a miscellaneous assortment of letters, newspapers, and books, adorned with postage stamps from every quarter of the world. Tolstoy looks gloomily at the pile. "Incense and annoyance," he thinks. "Distraction, anyhow! I wish to be more alone with myself and with God, wish that I did not have to play the part of navel to the universe, that I could keep far away from me all these things that disturb and confuse, that tend to make me vain, arrogant, untruthful, a seeker after fame. The best thing would be to throw the whole lot into the fire, and thus avoid waste of time and escape being puffed up with pride."

Nevertheless, curiosity has its way with him. Swiftly he looks through the medley of requests, complaints, business proposals, messages announcing visits, idle chatter. A brahmin writes from India to say that Tolstoy has misunderstood one of the sacred doctrines; a prisoner in a penitentiary tells the story of his life and asks advice; young men put their difficulties before him; beggars ask despairingly for help; one and all declare that he is the only person to whom they can look for succour, that he is the conscience of the world.

The furrows on his brow deepen. "How can I help anyone?" he thinks. "I who do not know how to help my-

self. Day after day I stray from my course, trying to find a new reason for bearing this unfathomable life, while using big words about truth in order to humbug myself. How amazing that they should come to me crying: 'Leo Nikolaevich, teach us how to live!' All that I do is a lie, is inflated and pretentious. Really I must long since have been drained dry by squandering my energies upon thousands and thousands of persons, instead of collecting them within myself; because I talk and talk and talk, instead of holding my peace, and silently listening to the truth from within. But I must not disappoint the writers of these letters, I must answer them."

To one of the letters he attends longer than to the rest, reading it a second and a third time. It is from a student, who fiercely declares that Tolstoy "preaches water and drinks wine." It is time for him to leave his house, to hand over his property to the peasants, and to take up his pilgrimage on God's highways. "The man is right," muses Tolstoy. "He says what my own conscience tells me. How can I explain to him what I cannot explain to myself? How can I defend myself, since he accuses me in my own name?" Taking this letter with him, he moves to go to his study, for he wishes to answer it instantly. The secretary follows him to the door and reminds him that the "Times" correspondent is coming to dinner and has asked for an interview.

Tolstoy's face darkens. "These importunate interviewers! What do they want of me? Only to pry into my life. They cannot come to learn my opinions, for these are set forth in my writings, where anyone who knows how to read can study them." Still, in a moment of weakness, he gives way. "Well, well, I will see him; but only for half an hour." Hardly has he crossed the threshold of

his study, when he has pricks of conscience. "Why did I yield once more? A grey-headed man, nearing death, I have not yet been able to rid myself of vanity, and I deliver myself up to these chatterers. Always I am weak when they try to force themselves upon me. Shall I never learn to hide myself, to hold my tongue? God help me!"

At length he is alone in his study. A scythe, a rake, and an axe are hanging on the bare wall. The room is uncarpeted, and scantily furnished. Tolstoy's writing-table and chair are of plain deal, substantially but roughly made. The place looks like a cross between a monk's cell and the interior of a peasant's cottage. On the table lies the manuscript of a half-finished philosophical essay at which he had been working the day before. He reads it over, erasing, amending, and adding here and there, in a large and childish handwriting. Again and again his pen stops because his mind strays from the work. "I am too shallow, too impatient. How can I say anything about God when I am not yet clear in my own mind as to the idea of God, when I have no firm standing-ground of my own, and when my thoughts fluctuate from day to day? How can I write in plain terms that everyone will understand, since I am writing of God and of life, both incomprehensible? I have undertaken something which is beyond my powers. I was so sure of myself in the days when I wrote novels and tales describing life as God has made it, and not as I, a muddle-headed old seeker after truth, would like it to be. I am no saint, and I should not presume to teach others. I am only one to whom God has granted keener senses than to most, that he may see God's world more clearly. Perhaps I was a sincerer and

better man when I devoted myself to the service of art, than I am now when I revile art!"

Looking round almost furtively, as if afraid that someone may be watching him, he goes to a hiding-place and takes out the stories at which he is now secretly working —secretly, because he has publicly stigmatized art as "superfluous" and "sinful." There they are, *Hadji Murad*, and *The Forged Coupon;* he turns the pages, and reads here and there. His eyes beam. "Yes," he says to himself, "it is well written, it is good. God sent me into his world that I might describe it, not that I might try to guess his thoughts. How lovely art is; how pure, creation; how full of anguish, thought! I was happy in the old days, though the tears streamed down my face when I was describing the spring morning in *Family Happiness;* when Sofia Andreevna still came to my room in the evening, her eyes bright with love, to embrace me. When she was copying it, she had to stop and thank me; we were happy all the night through, our whole life was happy. But I cannot turn back now, I must not disappoint people; I must persevere in the path, since they expect me to help them in their need. I must not pause, for my days are numbered." He sighs, and reluctantly puts the stories back in their hiding-place. Then, in the mood of a hack writer, he sets to work once more at his essay, knitting his brows, and hanging his head so low that his white beard brushes the paper on which he writes.

Noon at last! He has written enough for to-day. Jumping up, he runs downstairs. The groom is at the door, holding Délire, his favourite mare. He swings himself into the saddle, and the figure which has been bowed over the writing-table straightens. He looks big, strong, lively,

much younger than in his study, as, with the easy seat of a Cossack, he canters off towards the forest. A sense of renewed life warms his old body voluptuously, and the blood tingles in his finger-tips and ears. When he enters the grove of saplings, he draws rein to note how the sticky buds are thrusting upwards into the spring sunshine, and how, when he gazes heavenward, the delicate tracery of the twigs is tinted with green. He guides his mount to the birches, where, keen of vision, he watches the ants crawling along the bark, some of them laden with spoil, and others collecting pollen. The patriarch lingers for many minutes, musing upon the infinitely little and the immeasurably great. How wonderful it is, how wonderful it has seemed to him for more than seventy years, this nature which is the mirror of God, a mirror whose reflections are ever new, ever animated; this nature that is so much wiser in its quietude than the turmoil of human thought. His mare whinnies, and paws the ground impatiently, rousing Tolstoy from his reverie. Thereupon he sets off at full gallop, to feel and to hear the breeze, to enjoy the wildness and the passion of the senses. He rides on and on, happy to be freed from thought; rides forward for twenty versts, until his mount's flanks are spotted with foam. Then he turns, and trots quietly homeward. His eyes shine, he is light-hearted, happy as when he had ridden along the same road in his boyhood's days.

When he nears the village, his face falls once more. He has been scanning the fields with the eyes of an expert. Here, in the middle of his own lands, is a region that is badly kept, neglected; the fences have been broken and probably the wood has been used for firing; the ground has not been ploughed. Angrily, he rides up to the cabin to demand information. A dirty, slatternly woman, bare-

footed, with tousled hair, comes submissively to the door, two or three half naked children clinging timidly to her ragged skirt, while farther back in the untidy hut a fourth lies bawling. Frowning at her, he asks why everything has been allowed to run to seed like this. The woman answers in a flood of disconnected words. For six weeks her husband has been in jail, for stealing wood. How could she look after things in his absence? Her man is strong and industrious, and was driven to his offence by hunger. His Worship knows how things are with them; bad harvest, high taxes, the difficulty of paying rent. The children, seeing that their mother is tearful, mingle their howls with her sniffs. Tolstoy, wishing to cut her eloquence short, gives her some money, and takes to flight. He is gloomy; his joy has vanished. "So this is what happens on my land—no, not mine, but the land I have made over to my wife and my children. Why do I always hide like a coward behind my wife's complicity, my wife's fault? The assignment of my property to her was nothing but a farce played to deceive the world. After I have myself fed full upon what has been extorted from the peasants, my family goes on sucking wealth out of these poor wretches. I know perfectly well that in the rebuilt house where I live, every brick is made out of the sweat of these serfs; is their flesh, their labour, turned into stone. What right had I to give my wife and children something which did not belong to me, the earth which the peasants till? Shame upon you, Leo Tolstoy, who in God's name preach righteousness day after day, while the wretchedness of your neighbours stares in at your windows!" Overcast with wrath and sorrow is his countenance, as he rides between the stone pillars of the gateway leading to My Lord's mansion. The liveried footman

and the groom rush forward, one to hold his horse, and the other to help him to alight. "My slaves," he says to himself grimly.

The table is set for dinner in the big dining-room, a blue-and-white service, and silver utensils. There is a babble of lively conversation among the company assembled: the countess, sons and daughters, the secretary, the resident physician, the French governess and the English, one or two neighbours, a revolutionary student who has been installed as tutor, and the "Times" correspondent. As the master of the house enters, a respectful silence falls upon the gathering. Tolstoy bows with old-fashioned courtesy to the visitors, and sits down at the table without saying a word. When his vegetarian fare is set before him (asparagus, an imported delicacy, cooked with the utmost care), his thoughts turn involuntarily to the ragged woman whom he had solaced with a coin or two. "I wish I could make them understand that I cannot and will not live like this, waited on hand and foot, a four-course dinner, silver dishes, and other superfluities, while these poor neighbours of mine lack the first necessaries. They know perfectly well that I want only one sacrifice from them, the abandonment of all this luxury, which is a shameful denial of the equality God wishes men to observe. But my wife, who ought to share my thoughts as well as my bed and my life, is at enmity with my thoughts. She is a millstone round my neck, a burden to my conscience, dragging me down into a life of falsehood. Long ago I should have cut the cords with which they have bound me. What more concern have I with them? They trouble my life, and I trouble theirs. I am unwanted here, a burden to myself and to them all."

He looks at his wife, Sofia Andreevna, and, though

not of set purpose, he looks upon her as his enemy. He notes how old and grey she is. Her brow is furrowed like his own, and her withered lips are set in a woeful expression. The old man's heart grows tender at the sight. "How unhappy she is! What a tragical figure, she whom I took into my life as a laughing, innocent maiden. Five-and-forty years ago, more than a generation, our life together began. She was a girl, whilst I was already worn by excesses; and she has borne me thirteen children. She helped me to produce my books, she suckled my children; what have I made of her? She is filled with despair, irritable to the verge of insanity; a woman so unhappy that her sleeping draughts have to be kept under lock and key lest she should end her life by an overdose. My sons, too, I know they dislike me; and then there are my daughters, whom I am robbing of the natural pleasures of youth; the secretaries, who make notes of everything I say, picking my words over like sparrows among horse droppings—they have balsam and incense ready in their boxes to preserve my mummy in a museum. Then there is the English puppy, waiting with his notebook to record what I am to tell him about our peasant land-tenure. This dinner table, this house, are an offence against God and truth; and I sit here in hell, warm and comfortable, instead of taking my own way. It would be better for me, it would be better for her, if I were dead. I have tarried far too long, and have not lived up to my principles."

The servant offers him another course, fruit with whipped cream, cooled on ice. With an angry gesture, he pushes the silver dish away. "Is there anything wrong with it?" asks Sofia Andreevna solicitously. "Is it too rich for you?"

He answers with bitter emphasis: "Yes, that is the trouble. It is too rich for me in more senses than one!"

His sons are mortified; his wife is hurt; the interviewer pricks up his ears, and makes a mental note of the aphorism.

At length the meal is over, and the company goes to the drawing-room. Tolstoy has an argument with the young revolutionist who, though respectful, does not hesitate to contradict the old man. The latter flares up, talks tempestuously, almost shouting, for he still becomes vehement in dispute, throwing all his energies into it, as he used to throw them into the chase and lawn-tennis. Suddenly he restrains himself, lowers his voice, and says: "Perhaps I am wrong. God sends His thoughts at random into men's minds, and which of us can tell whether he is uttering God's ideas or his own?" To turn the conversation, he says cheerfully: "Let's take a stroll in the park."

They set out, but there is an interruption. In front of the house, beneath the "tree of the poor," an ancient elm, are some common folk waiting to see Tolstoy. They have tramped many miles, to ask advice or beg for money. They are sunburned, weary, their shoes powdered with dust. When "His Worship the barin" appears, some prostrate themselves, Russian fashion. Briskly, he steps up to the group saying: "What do you want?"—"I want to ask, Excellency, . . ."—"I am not excellent," breaks in Tolstoy. "No one is excellent but God."—The peasant twists his cap uneasily between his fingers, but at length manages to stammer out his inquiry. Is it true that the land is now to belong to the peasants, and if so when is he to get his plot? Tolstoy answers impatiently, being always annoyed by anything that is difficult to explain.—A forest guard is the next questioner. He wants to know

all sorts of things about God. "Can you read?" asks Tolstoy. Being answered in the affirmative, he sends for a copy of *What Is to be Done*, and dismisses the inquirer with this book for answer.—The beggars are dealt with summarily, being given a copper apiece, for Tolstoy is growing impatient. Turning round, he notices that the journalist has snapped him in the act. His face darkens again. "So you have taken a picture of me, the good Tolstoy, always helpful, bestowing alms on the peasants! Anyone who could see into my heart would know that I have never been good, though I have tried to learn how to be good. I have never really cared about anything beyond my own self. I have never been helpful, and what I have given to the poor in the whole course of my life does not amount to half of what I have, as a young man, gambled away in a single night. It never occurred to me, though I knew Dostoeffsky was starving, to send him a couple of hundred roubles which would have freed him from his troubles for a month. Yet I allow people to make much of me, to glorify me as a man who shows true nobility, though I know all the time that I have scarcely begun to set my foot upon the right path."

He has been longing for his walk in the park, and, when it at length begins, he presses on so impatiently that the others find it hard to keep up with the nimble old man. As a matter of fact, he does not want any more conversation; only to enjoy the play of his muscles for awhile, and then to watch his daughters at a game of tennis, to enjoy innocent bodily activity in himself and others. At the tennis court, he follows every movement with keen interest, laughing heartily at a clever service or a quick return. Then, with his senses refreshed, he takes another stroll. Now he goes back to his study, to read a little, to

rest a little; he tires more readily than of old, and his limbs are apt to feel heavy as the day goes on. Lying down on the sofa, closing his eyes, feeling old and worn, he thinks: "Better so! How I used to dread death, the spectre from which I wished to hide, trying to pretend that there was no such thing. That anxiety has departed, and I am glad to feel death near." A tired old man, plunged in reverie, alone with himself and his thoughts! At such a time, he is beautiful to look upon.

In the evening he rejoins the family circle, for his day's work is done. Goldenweiser, the pianist, offers to play something. "Yes, yes!" says Tolstoy, and leans on the piano, shading his eyes with his hands that no one may see how profoundly he is stirred by the music. This music which he has so often decried, how wonderfully it affects him, softening the asperities of life, making the soul gentle and good. "Why should I ever have reviled art? Where else can we find solace? Thinking confuses us, science bewilders us; where else can we feel God's presence so plainly as in the creations of the artist? Beethoven and Chopin, you are my brothers. I feel that your eyes are resting on me, and that the heart of all mankind is beating within my breast. Forgive me, brothers, for my invectives!" The piece ends with a mighty chord; there is a burst of applause, in which Tolstoy joins after momentary hesitation. The music has cured his restlessness, and he can now join cheerfully in the conversation. At length, after all the ups and downs of the day, tranquillity reigns.

Before going to bed, he returns to his study. In accordance with his usual practice, he must hold an assize over himself, critical concerning every hour of this day as concerning every hour of his life. He opens the

diary, and the eye of conscience stares at him from the blank pages on which he is to write. He thinks of the peasants, of the poverty for which he holds himself responsible, of the way he has ridden to and fro without giving any help beyond the bestowal of a few pitiful coins. He was impatient with the beggars; he harboured unkind feelings towards his wife. All these offences are now recorded in his diary, the book of self-accusation, and, summing up, he writes: "Slothful once more, palsied in soul. Have not done enough good! Even now I cannot learn the hardest thing of all, to love the people round about me, rather than humanity at large. Help me, God, help me!"

He writes the date of the following day, and the initials for the words "If I live." Another day has been lived through to the end. With bowed back, the old man goes into his bedroom, takes off his blouse and his heavy boots, flings himself on his bed, and, as always before going to sleep, meditates on death. For a time his thoughts continue to flutter vividly, like brightly coloured butterflies; gradually the colours fade, as in the forest when night is falling. The pleasing confusion that heralds sleep takes possession of his mind. . . .

He comes to himself with a start. Was not that a footfall in the neighbouring room? Yes, furtive steps! Noiselessly he gets out of bed, and looks through the keyhole into the study. There is a light in the room. Someone is rummaging his desk, turning over the pages of his diary, prying into the recesses of his conscience—Sofia Andreevna, his wife. She wants to learn his intimate secrets, will not even allow him the privacy of being alone with God. Everywhere, in his house, in his life, in his soul, he is exposed to the shafts of greed and curiosity.

Tremulous with anger, he is about to fling open the door and berate the spy, the traitor, his wife. But he masters his rage: "Perhaps this test has been laid upon me." He creeps back to bed—to lie awake for hours, Leo Nikolaevich Tolstoy, the greatest, the most gifted man of his time, betrayed in his own house, tortured by doubts, in an agony of loneliness.

RESOLVE AND TRANSFIGURATION

One who wishes to believe in immortality, must lead an immortal life here on earth.

DIARY, MARCH 6, 1896

LEO TOLSTOY was seventy-two years old when he crossed the threshold of the new century. Erect in mind, and yet already become a quasi-legendary figure, was the heroical old man as he moved towards the completion of his career. The aged pilgrim's countenance above the snow-white beard looked gentler than of yore, the skin yellowing, translucent as parchment, and (like a venerable parchment) profusely wrinkled, inscribed with numberless runes. A captivating and indulgent smile often fluttered over his lips; rarely were his bushy brows knitted in anger; the mood of a man temperamentally prone to wrath had mellowed with time. "How kindly and considerate he has become," said his brother, who had known him all these years as ever ready to flare up, as untamable. It was true. The intensity of his passions was abating. Weary of the unending wrestle, weary of self-torment, his spirit was becoming tranquil, and would often allow itself rest. That was why his face looked peaceful and good-natured in the last rays of the setting sun. In this transfigured shape the face of Tolstoy comes down to posterity as a universal heritage. It is the serious and calm visage of the man as he was in extreme old age that count-

less generations will cherish as the likeness of Tolstoy.

Old age, which in general plays havoc with the image of a hero, gives majesty in this instance. Harshness has been transformed into sublimity, passion transmuted into gentleness, rough intolerance subtilized into sympathetic understanding. In actual fact, the veteran fighter wants nothing but peace, "peace with God and man," peace even with his worst enemy—death. The panicky dread, the animal terror of dying has happily become a thing of the past, and the inevitable is faced with composure. "I remind myself that to-morrow I may not be alive, trying day by day to familiarize myself with the thought, and growing accustomed to it." Now note the wonder! As soon as the terror of death has been allayed, the author's creative faculty takes on a new lease of life. Just as Goethe in the evening of his days came back from the distraction of scientific work to his "main business," so Tolstoy the preacher and moralist returns in his eighth decade to the art which he had renounced and reviled. In the twentieth century the greatest imaginative writer of the nineteenth rose again in the flesh. Fearlessly restringing his mighty bow, he recalls an experience of his Cossack days, and forges it into the epic tale *Hadji Murad*, resounding with the clash of arms, a heroic legend, told as simply and as grandly as in his best earlier manner. The tragedy of the *Living Corpse*, the masterly tales *After the Ball* and *Kornei Vasilieff*, and a number of short stories, were the splendid results of his return to art, of his emancipation from the moralist's introspective torment. No reader of these works would ever guess them to have been penned by the tired hand of a very old man. Their prose has a free and unconstrained flow, like that of a mighty river which runs for all eternity; and the

author's gaze, undimmed by senility, pierces to the heart of man's destiny. The judge has laid aside his robes to become the observer and recorder once again. Aware, at length, that the divine purposes are inscrutable, he ceases to inquire into them, and is content to describe what happens. Tolstoy has grown kindly, not tired. A primitive peasant, he will go on tilling the inexhaustible soil of his thoughts, will continue to elaborate these thoughts in his diary, until the pen drops from his dying hand.

This indefatigable worker cannot rest, since he regards it as his destiny to continue the struggle to the end. One sacred piece of work still awaits completion. It does not bear mainly on life; it concerns his own approaching death. The last endeavours of this mighty sculptor are to be devoted to the shaping of that death in such a fashion that it shall be worthy, shall be exemplary. At none of his works of art did he toil so long and so strenuously, as at this problem of how to die fitly; to no other did he devote so much anxious thought. A true artist, always trying to improve his work, he was especially eager that the last, the most universally human of them all, should come as near as possible to perfection.

The struggle for a worthy death is the decisive battle in the seventy years' war for truth; and of all his battles, it is the one which demands from him the greatest sacrifices, for it has to be fought against his own household. A crowning deed has still to be done, a deed from which he has shrunk for reasons that are no longer obscure to us. He must finally, irrevocably, rid himself of his property. Like Kutusoff in *War and Peace*, who would fain avoid a decisive battle, and hopes to get the better

of his formidable antagonist by the device of a strategic retreat, Tolstoy has again and again put off the ultimate disposal of his possessions, and has tried to appease his conscience by taking refuge in the "wisdom of inaction." His every attempt to renounce the posthumous rights in his literary works has been frustrated by the fierce opposition of his family, for he is too weak (or too humane) to ride roughshod over their wishes. Year after year he has contented himself with personally refusing to touch the money his writings earn, or to make any use of his income. But, as he says in self-condemnation, he did this only because he had rejected ownership on principle, and would be open to the charge of inconsistency had he been careful to maintain his own proprietary rights. "I was animated by false shame." Again and again, after attempts each of which is a domestic tragedy, he postpones for an indefinite period a clear and binding decision upon this matter.

But in 1908, when his attainment of the age of eighty is to be celebrated by the issue of a complete edition of his works, the declared enemy of property is forced to take action. Henceforward Yasnaya Polyana, the shrine of pilgrimage, the place regarded with veneration by millions in the Old World and the New, is, behind closed doors, the theatre of a quarrel between Tolstoy and his nearest relatives. This dispute is all the more harsh and hateful because it is about a despicable matter, about money; and it is one whose violence is but inadequately disclosed even by the shrill outcries in the diary. "How hard it is to shake oneself free from this filthy, sinful property," groans Tolstoy on July 25, 1908. Half the members of his family are clinging desperately to dross, fighting for it tooth and nail. The scenes that take place

are fit for the pages of a sensational novel. Drawers are broken open; cupboards are rifled; eavesdroppers listen to private conversations; efforts are made to put the old man's affairs in commission. These things alternate with tragical moments; with attempts at suicide on the part of Sofia Andreevna, and with Tolstoy's threats that he will flee from the "hell of Yasnaya Polyana." But the extremity of torment helps to steel his will; and at length, a few months before his death, resolved that this death shall be a worthy one, determined to put an end to all ambiguity, he decides to draw up a will which shall make all mankind the heir of his spiritual property. One last lie is needed for the achievement of this ultimate truth. Convinced that he is spied upon at home, he goes as if upon an ordinary ride to the neighbouring forest of Grumont, and there, upon a tree-stump, in the presence of three witnesses and some impatient horses, he signs the document that is to make his wishes valid after his death.

Now he has broken his fetters, and he believes that he has decided the issue. But the hardest and most important step has still to be taken. Nothing can be kept secret in this abode of chatter, where suspicion lurks in every corner. Soon his wife and the others guess that Tolstoy has clandestinely made a will. They use false keys to open boxes and cupboards, pry into the diary to see if they can find mention of a significant visit; and again the countess threatens suicide, this time unless the detested "confederate" Cherkoff ceases to visit the house. Tolstoy realizes that here, amid passion and greed, in an atmosphere of hatred and unrest, he cannot achieve what is to be his last work of art, a worthy death. He is overwhelmed with anxiety lest they should succeed in depriv-

ing him of "those precious minutes which are perhaps the finest of all." From the depths of his being, there surges up the thought which has never been absent from his mind during all these years, the thought that, to attain the true end of life, he must be willing, for holiness' sake, to leave wife and children and worldly possessions. Twice before, he had fled from home. The first time had been in 1884, when strength had failed him in the act, and he had constrained himself to return to his wife, then in the throes of childbirth. That night, Aleksandra had been born, the daughter who now rallied to her father's side, and was ready to help him on his chosen path. In 1897, thirteen years later, he had made another attempt, leaving for his wife the imperishable letter in which he set forth the reasons of conscience which had driven him to flight: "I resolved on flight, first of all because, as I grow older, I find my present life more and more burdensome, and I long ever more earnestly for solitude; and secondly because, now that the children are grown up, my presence in the house is no longer necessary. . . . The main thing is this. Just as the Indians withdraw into the jungle when they attain the age of sixty, so every religiously minded man feels, when he grows old, a longing to devote his last years to God, instead of wasting them on amusement, sport, chatter, and lawn-tennis. So do I, now that I am approaching seventy, feel a yearning for rest and solitude, that I may live at peace with my own conscience, or, if that be unattainable, that I may at least put an end to the glaring disharmony between my life and my faith."

This time, too, he had returned home, the familiar ties of kindliness being too strong for him. He was not equal to the demand he made on himself, the call was

not yet loud enough. Now, thirteen years after the second flight, twice thirteen after the first, the impulse had become irresistible, the inexplicable lure of distance had grown too strong to be withstood. In July, 1910, he wrote in his diary: "I have no choice but to flee, and I say to myself, 'Now the time is come to show your Christianity!' C'est le moment ou jamais. No one needs me here. Help me, God; instruct me; I want only to do thy will, not mine. I write these words and ask myself, 'Is it really true?' Am I not still posturing before God? Help! Help! Help!" Even now he hesitates. Anxiety regarding the fate of the others holds him back. He is alarmed lest the wish to flee should be sinful, after all. Scrutinizing his own soul, he asks himself whether there may not come a summons from within, an imperious order from above, to decide matters for him when his will is still hesitant. On his knees, as it were, praying before the inscrutable Wisdom in whose guidance he believes, he confides his anxieties and distresses to his diary.

At length, when the hour has come, an inner voice speaks to him the ancient commandment: "Rise up, take thy staff and thy cloak, and set forth upon thy pilgrimage!"

THE FLIGHT TO GOD

Man must be alone, if he is to draw near to God.

DIARY

OCTOBER 28, 1910, towards six o'clock in the morning; under the trees it is still pitch-dark, so that the figures of three or four persons moving stealthily close to the manor house of Yasnaya Polyana are barely visible. One can just hear the clink of keys, the rattle of wards, but doors are being opened as noiselessly as possible, as if by thieves. The coachman, who is putting the horses to, is no less careful to avoid making a clatter. In two of the rooms of the house, shadows move to and fro, carrying dark lanterns, picking up parcels, opening and shutting drawers, all with the utmost precaution. They glide out through the doors, and speak only in whispers as they tumble over roots in the pleasance. Then, avoiding the front of the house, the carriage drives away through a postern gate.

What is afoot? Have burglars been breaking in? Have the tsar's police, at long last, made a night raid upon the suspect's dwelling? No, all that has happened is that Leo Tolstoy has been escaping from the prison of his every-day life. The call has come to him, irresistible, decisive—an unmistakable sign. Once more he has detected his wife at dead of night, rummaging among his papers, and on the instant his determination has become fixed to leave the woman "who has abandoned me in the spirit," to flee

away, anywhere, to God, to himself, to the death which has been allotted him. Slipping a cloak over his working blouse, wearing a rough cap and rubber overshoes, he departs, taking no belongings with him beyond what he needs to commit his thoughts to paper—diary and pen. At the station, he scribbles a line to his wife, and sends it back by the coachman: "I have done what men of my age are apt to do, have left this worldly life, that I may pass my last days in tranquillity and seclusion." Then, with one companion, Dushan the friend and physician, he takes his seat in a third-class compartment, Leo Tolstoy, running away to God.

But he no longer calls himself Leo Tolstoy. Just as Charles V, the lord of two worlds, voluntarily renounced the insignia of power that he might bury himself in the cloister at Yuste in Estremadura, so Tolstoy, ridding himself of money, house, and fame, wants to rid himself also of the well-known name. He calls himself T. Nikolaeff, the new name of a man who wants to enter upon a new life and to find the way to a worthy death. All ties have been snapped now, he can pursue his pilgrimage along unfamiliar roads, become a faithful servant of the true word. In the monastery of Shamardino he says farewell to his sister the abbess; two old folk, surrounded by gentle monks. Here, a few days later, he is joined by the daughter who was born in the night following his first flight from home, twenty-six years earlier. But he cannot tarry to enjoy the quiet of Shamardino, for he dreads being followed hither, and dragged back into the false existence of his home. On October 31st, having once more felt the touch of an unseen finger, he arouses his daughter Aleksandra at four in the morning, and resumes his flight. Where is he going? Anywhere! Bul-

garia, the Caucasus, no matter where, so long as it is to some place where his name is unknown, where he can enjoy the luxury of solitude, can find himself—and God.

Fame, however, the dread familiar of his life, the tormentor and tempter, will not abandon its prey so readily. The world will not allow Tolstoy to follow his own bent, to obey unchallenged the promptings of his elemental will. As soon as the hunted man is in the train once more, as inconspicuous as possible with his cap drawn well down over his eyes, a fellow passenger recognizes the famous author, and passes on the news. Men and women throng the corridor, eager to catch a glimpse of him. Many of them have newspapers, in which column after column contains accounts of the costly beast which has escaped from its cage. He has been betrayed, is surrounded; for the last time, fame bars Tolstoy's road towards perfectionment. The telegraph wires beside the train that roars on its way are humming with messages about the distinguished passenger; every station is in touch with the police; the railway officials have been mobilized; the family at Yasnaya Polyana is ordering a special train to bring him home; from Moscow, from St. Petersburg, from Nijni Novgorod, from all quarters of the compass, reporters are tracking their quarry. The Holy Synod is sending a priest to catch the penitent. Now a stranger boards the train, and walks past the compartment several times, each time in a new disguise—a detective. No, no, fame will not let the victim escape. Leo Tolstoy must not be left alone with himself. People will not admit that he belongs to himself, and is entitled to seek salvation in his own way.

He has already been surrounded by his enemies, and there is no cover, not a thicket in which he can hide. When

the train reaches the frontier, an official will, with the utmost politeness, inform him that he is not allowed to leave Russia. Wherever he may pause, his fame will be awaiting him, the clamour of innumerable tongues. He is in the toils, and cannot escape. As he turns these thoughts over in his mind, he becomes aware that there is something amiss with him physically, that he feels very ill.

Aleksandra notices that her father is shivering, that he is leaning wearily against the hard wooden back of the seat. The cold stage is followed by a hot one, and soon he is dripping with sweat. A kindly access of fever has come to his rescue. Death is making ready to hide him from his pursuers.

When the train stops at the little wayside station of Astapovo, Tolstoy is obviously too ill to go farther on his journey. There is no hospitable mansion near at hand, no hotel, not even the poorest of inns. Nothing, but the one-storied station-building, a wooden structure containing two rooms, the public waiting-room and the station-master's private quarters. Diffidently, the official offers the use of the latter. Tolstoy is led within, and sees the realization of his dream. A poor little room, low-ceiled, dimly lighted by a kerosene lamp, a small iron bedstead —the antipodes of the luxuries and conveniences from which he has fled. He will pass his last hours in surroundings that conform to his most ardent desires; his death will be a worthy one, purified from dross, symbolical.

In a few days the great edifice of this death has been upbuilded, a sublime exemplification of his teaching, fundamentally simple, imperturbable, on foundations which nothing can sap. No matter that just outside the door fame lies in wait for him, panting and licking her lips; no matter that hot upon his trail come reporters, sen-

sation-mongers, spies, detectives, policemen, priests sent by the Holy Synod, army officers dispatched by the tsar; they may not enter, their shameless curiosity is barred away from the dying man, who is left to the solitude which he has craved. His daughter tends him; she, Dushan the physician, and one other friend: their quiet affection surrounds his deathbed with an atmosphere of peace. On the bedside table lies the diary, the speaking-tube through which he converses with God, but his hands are now too weak to hold a pencil. He dictates to his daughter. Though his breathing is difficult, and though his voice falters at times, he communicates his last thoughts, saying that God is "that infinite all, of which man feels himself to be a finite part, the revelation of God in matter, time, and space"; and he declares that only through love can earthly beings enter into communion one with another. Two days before his death, he is still able to collect his forces in the attempt to grasp the essence of truth, to attain the unattainable; for only by slow degrees are the radiations of this tireless brain dimmed at the oncoming of death.

Outside is the throng of the curious; he is no longer aware of their presence. Sofia Andreevna is there, humbled and penitent, eager to catch a glimpse of him through the window, but his mind is otherwise occupied than with the woman who has been his companion for eight-and-forty years. More and more hazy grow the things of this world to the most clear-sighted of men; sluggish and yet more sluggish is the current of his blood. In the night of November 4th, rousing himself once more, he says with a groan: "But the peasants—how do peasants die?" This titanic life is still combating the titan, death. Not until November 7th does the life of the man who will

live for ever come to an end. The white head sinks into the pillow, and the light dies out of the eyes that have seen more clearly than any others. Now at length does the indefatigable seeker know the true meaning of life.

ENVOY

The man is dead, but his relationship to the world continues to influence his fellows, not only as when he was alive but far more powerfully. That influence is magnified by his reasonability and by his love, and, like all that is alive, it goes on growing for ever and ever.

FROM A LETTER

MAXIM GORKY once called Tolstoy "a humankindly man," and the phrase is an apt one. Tolstoy is our human brother, moulded out of the same friable clay and affected with the same earthly inadequacies, though more plainly aware of them than the rest of us, more painfully afflicted by them. Leo Tolstoy was not a man of loftier type than others of his generation, did not differ from them in kind. He was only more human than most, more intensive, keener sighted, more perfectly awake, more passionate—like an artist's proof, a first and wonderfully sharp impression from the unseen original kept in the master-craftsman's workshop.

To depict this archetypal man, whose image (often recognizably enough) is hidden away within us all, to disclose his figure as clearly as possible and as completely as possible amid the complexities of our world; this was Tolstoy's primary aim as a writer, an aim that could never be fully attained, and one that was all the more heroic for that. He was able to seek out and describe Everyman thanks to the unrivalled veracity of his senses;

he sought and questioned Everyman in the hidden recesses of his own consciousness, probing into depths which can be reached only through self-inflicted wounds. With ferocious zeal, with pitiless severity, this moral genius explored his own soul, in the endeavour to free the archetypal man from earthly incrustations, and to show us our own selves ennobled to become true images of God and models of what we must endeavour to be. Never resting, never satisfied, never debasing his art to formalism, he devoted his whole life to an attempt to achieve self-perfectionment through self-portraiture. Not since Goethe has any imaginative writer been so successful in thus revealing both himself and the archetypal man.

Only to outward seeming has Leo Tolstoy passed away. He is still at work among us. Many of us have looked into his piercing eyes, have felt the brotherly clasp of his hand; and yet already he has become a legendary figure, and his struggle against himself is an example to our generation.

For unceasingly we strive, in the flux of time, to find anchorage upon certain emblematic and typical figures, as symbols of our undying purpose; we fix our eyes on the greatest, as witnesses to our own latent powers. Thus Tolstoy the indefatigable worker is the embodiment of Everyman's will, and Tolstoy the incomparably sincere is the embodiment of Everyman's search after knowledge and truth.

The seeking mind can only recognize the limits and laws of its own functioning through a study of the truths that are quickening within itself. It is only through the self-portraiture of great artists that the genius of mankind becomes comprehensible to earthbound mortals.